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**The ritual humor of students: Capping at Victoria University,
1902–1988**

Smith, Moira Lorraine, Ph.D.

Indiana University, 1992

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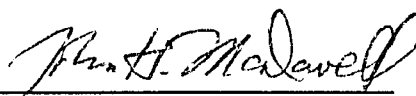
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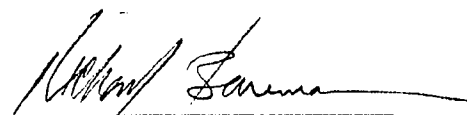
MOIRA SMITH

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
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in the Department of Folklore
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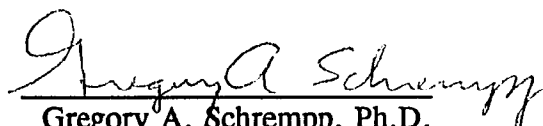
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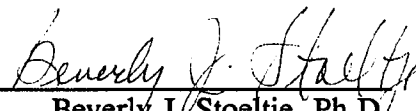
Accepted by the Graduate faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


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16 December 1991

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In memory of
Joe and Elsie Kenyon

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It is a convention in the rhetoric of academe to speak of the university as a community of scholars and teachers. In my two academic homes, Victoria University and Indiana University, I have had the privilege of working in two places where this ideal is a reality. Without the many and varied contributions of many people and organizations in the United States and New Zealand, this study would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Moira Smith

The Ritual Humor of Students:

Capping at Victoria University, 1902-1988

Capping is graduation; in New Zealand it consists of both formal ceremonies and a festival of ludic events produced by undergraduates. This study examines capping at one New Zealand university from 1902 to 1988, with detailed examination of the ceremonies themselves, into which students introduced interjections and horseplay; the satirical and frequently outrageous student processions through the city; and the large-scale hoaxes that students perpetrated on members of the public. These activities flourished even though they severely tested public and official tolerance, and were often judged to have gone "over the limit." Since 1970, however, capping has retrenched and become less public because, according to insiders, of a failure of license.

Capping raises the problem of how license for festivity, reversal, and ritual humor is achieved in a modern complex society. Using Gregory Bateson's and Erving Goffman's concepts of play, license, and framing, I investigate how students obtained and kept license for capping for over eighty years, framing their performances as spontaneous play. At the same time however, a chorus public disapproval, even outrage, was a constant accompaniment to capping.

Accounts of conflict in and opponents to festivity are no new thing in the literature on urban festivals. However, concepts of festivity, festive license, and Max Gluckman's model of ritual reversal all treat antagonism and opposition as extrinsic elements and as indications

of the dysfunction of license. This study revises the model to incorporate the existence of opposition and negative evaluations as intrinsic ingredients, which in the case of capping were valued by performers as a sign of successful performance.

With this revision of the concept of festive license in mind, the retrenchment of capping cannot be attributed to the failure of license. The cause is sought instead in an ideological shift that has occurred throughout the western world since the Second World War. In this shift, the political implications of humorous public performances like capping have been made explicit, rendering ritual humor problematic in a way that exceeds the usual problems of achieving festive license.

John H. McDowell

William Saruman

Linda Repp

Beverly Stalder

Gregory Schenck

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1	Introduction 1
2	Ritual and Festival 29
3	Town and Gown Down Under: New Zealand Universities 73
4	Graduation Ceremonies: "Tossing a Chancellor on a Sea of Wit" 101
5	Capping Processions: "Something of Definitely Immoral Flavour" 150
6	Capping Hoaxes: Unbending the Mind 195
7	The Decline and Fall of Capping or Why Politically Correct People Can't Laugh 231
	Appendix 1: List of Informants 281
	References 287

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On a chilly April morning in 1988, in the city of Wellington, New Zealand, people on their way to work observed a motley crowd of people disporting themselves with wine and rice bubbles in a small park on the main city street. Dress ranged from formal suits, ties, and school blazers, to pajamas. Some participants had apparently walked into their closets that morning and put on whatever came to hand. One man wore a grubby laboratory coat, on the back of which were the words "MIGHT MIGHTY CAPPING BAND" and "CAPPED 1988 AD."

Initially this group of revellers confined their attention to their cereal and bubbly. After a time a number of them took positions at the edge of the park, facing the street, and began to greet passers-by with an exaggeratedly loud "GOOD MORNING!" Some answered back, some merely smiled, and others hurried past resolutely ignoring the greeting. At this point, someone spotted a small pink convertible parked on the street nearby. Seconds later it was encircled by revelers; soon thereafter it was being hoisted bodily from its place and being deposited carefully on the grass. A tablecloth was draped over the hood; wine, flowers, champagne glasses, and a teddy bear were added, and the car was acclaimed as the

"best-dressed table." The runner-up stood nearby: a small picnic table placed on its end and dressed in shirt, slacks, and blazer (see figures 2-4).

As the morning advanced the effects of sparkling white wine for breakfast became increasingly apparent. All at once the festivities were arrested when someone cried, "Dead ant!" At once the entire company rushed pell-mell onto the adjacent road. As the traffic lights changed from red to green to red again, and while cars, trucks, and buses waited and passers-by watched from the safety of the pavement, they lay down on their backs in the middle of the road, clasped their hands behind their heads, and waved their legs in the air (figure 5). This task completed they scurried back to their park.

After this things began to degenerate. Attention now turned to the modernist water fall/fountain at the back of the park--someone had brought detergent--the inevitable bubble fight ensued and finished as quickly as it had begun. Somewhere a hidden maintenance person switched off the water to the fountain, just as some in the group were inspired by the resemblance between it and a urinal and began to act out this simile. After that all that was left was to pack up, pose for the press photographer who had belatedly arrived, and head back up the hill to the university.

Amongst this crowd of students--for that is what they were-- at the 1988 Capping Champagne Breakfast I played the role of ethnographer, juggling camera, note pad, and paper cup full of sparkling wine. As I noted these latter-day celebrations in the tiny Wellington park, I was reminded of other student escapades perpetrated in Wellington in years past and preserved in newspapers and archives.

Ten years before the champagne breakfast, on a weekday morning in late April, Wellington householders awoke to find the following official-looking communication in their mailboxes:

By The Cats Act 1977, Section 13(b). The Wellington City Council hereby gives notice that all domestic, pedigree or mongrel cats must be registered on or before the 3rd day of May, 1978. Registration shall be \$1.00 per cat, per household. Failure to comply with this Regulation by 3rd May will result in a penalty registration fee of \$2.00. All registration forms are available from the Post Office. DATED this 5th day of April, 1978.

The notice was signed by the secretary for the Town Clerk. I found a copy of this notice in the files of the Wellington City Corporation. Next to it was a letter sent by the Town Clerk to a city resident, which read:

I believe you are the Mrs C____ who sent me a cheque for \$1.00 to cover the registration of one silver tabby female cat, and that you sent this because of a "Notice to Householders" which was presumably left in your letter box. I am sorry to say that the whole exercise is a Victoria University capping celebration hoax. The Council has no proposal to introduce the registration of cats and I return your cheque for \$1.00.

On another occasion twenty years earlier, workers on their lunch breaks on a central city street were shocked when, without warning, shots rang out. As a car sped away in haste a young man sank to the ground, bleeding profusely. Anxious spectators gathered around. Concern turned to chagrin when the victim raised himself off the ground and suddenly ran off, leaving behind a sign that read, "This could happen to you if you don't buy Cappicade."

On another day in May, workers perched at office windows and lunchtime crowds gathered on the city streets to watch a procession of costumed revelers impersonate the Queen, the Mayor, the Governor-general, Charles Chaplin, and other notables. As the procession passed its members assaulted the audience with flour, kisses, and dead fish. That evening, some of the procession participants were in the audience at a ceremony in the town hall. Diplomats, politicians, and academics spoke in solemn tones of the highest ideals of service, education, and intellect, while from the galleries and the back of the hall young men made noisy interjections, played on horns and bells, and released startled wildfowl into the hall.

All of these varied, extraordinary incidents are taken from the 90-year history of a single event, the New Zealand students' capping week. Towards the end of the first academic term of the year, New Zealand universities hold graduation ceremonies for the students who completed their degree requirements in the previous year. At universities around the country, undergraduates take this opportunity each year to produce traditional celebrations of their own. This study focuses on capping at one university -- Victoria University of Wellington.

"Capping" refers firstly to the act of being "capped" or receiving one's diploma at a university graduation ceremony. From the first capping ceremonies held by Victoria in 1902, students arranged a day of celebration to mark the occasion. The first complete program that I have found, dating from 1904, lists several events that filled what they called the "Students' Gala Day." In the afternoon the diplomas were presented in a ceremony in a borrowed hall in the city. That evening, in the

same venue, students performed a program of entertainment, billed the "Students' Carnival" and open to the (paying) public. The program comprised songs, recitations, farces, humorous and dramatic routines performed by students. Finally the Students' Association hosted a dance and supper, billed as a "Social Re-Union of Graduates and Undergraduates."

As the number of students and graduates grew, the number and complexity of Diploma Day events also increased, spilling over into two and then three consecutive days instead of the original one. From 1913 the students' stage show began to run for two nights. Festivities were scaled down in response to the exigencies of World War I, but capping reemerged in the 1920s with the same events but clad in much more splendid clothes. The old Students' Carnival -- reduced to a "Capping Concert" during the war -- was now an "Extravaganza." Where once there had been a dance for students and graduates, there was now a "Capping Ball." By the late 1920s student capping celebrations filled three and sometimes four days; by 1953 the original Diploma Day had become "Capping Week" (Weir House Magazine, 1953:9).

The students' procession, or "procesh," was instituted in 1910 as a way of advertising the capping concert, and became an annual event in the city as crowds lined the streets to watch students in outlandish costumes and on home-made floats. Procesh was satirical, irreverent, and humorous in tone, and often scatological and obscene in content. The boundaries of a prearranged route and time did not suffice to contain procesh, which regularly burst out to carry festive inversion and license

throughout the city in the form of playful takeovers of public landmarks, and humorous and unannounced street dramas. These forms of uncontrolled festivity and disorder were known as capping stunts, which eventually took the form of large-scale hoaxes in which students deceived large numbers of the public as publicly as possible.

The Date of Capping

In an American university there is little difference between senior students and those about to graduate; but in New Zealand universities the distinction is much more significant, due to the peculiar position of the capping ceremony in the New Zealand academic calendar. Instead of being held at the end of the academic year, after final examinations, capping in New Zealand has always been at or near the end of the first term of the year. Thus students in their final year of study sit their exams in October and November, but do not formally graduate until the following April or May, when their degrees are officially conferred either in absentia or at the capping ceremony. Perhaps because of this lengthy interval between finishing degree requirements and actually receiving the degree, a special term is applied to people in this liminal status. Since at least 1916, the academic term for them has been graduands--those who are about to graduate (Spike, 29, June 1916:41).

The delayed date of capping is usually explained as a survival from the first days of higher education in New Zealand. This explanation is well-known among faculty, students, and ex-students today, and sometimes takes on the coloration of an

etiological legend. The following version of the traditional explanation comes from a man who was a student at Victoria University in the early 1970s:

[Why was capping held in May?]

We were always told, or it was always assumed at university, that it was a hangover from the days when all the universities' papers had been marked in the U.K. And by the time that they were all marked, and sent back over by ship of course it was about--it took that time from Christmas, when the exams were set, to get them back. It took about five months, in days of yore when they were assessed in the U.K. That's the story we were always told. Whether it's true or not I don't know; I suspect it's probably not!
(Gordon Tait, W 3-16-88:138).

From its inception the University of New Zealand, of which Victoria was a constituent college, had a policy of employing examiners in Britain to set and mark their students' finals. This policy made sense in the nineteenth century, when New Zealand's fledgling university colleges were explicitly modelled on British prototypes in organization and in academic custom, and when the professors were all recruited in Britain (MacKenzie 1924; Beaglehole 1949). The external examination system was devised to ensure that the quality of the colonial colleges was up to par, and it points to the strong emotional, economic, and institutional ties that New Zealand kept with the Mother Country.

Because of either bureaucratic inertia or persistent insecurity about the quality of the home-made educational product, the external examination system was only gradually abandoned, despite strong opposition from many of the New Zealand professors (Beaglehole 1949:131-154; 205-207). According to oral tradition, it took

the Second World War to bring reform to this aspect of New Zealand higher education. The following version of this tradition comes from two retired schoolteachers who graduated in 1933 and 1945, respectively:

OLGA HARDING: My Honours thing [i.e. thesis] was marked in England. And there wasn't airmail, and therefore results didn't come back until March, or April; I'm not quite sure when I was notified about it. I think all the early things did go overseas for marking.

NITA MCMASTER: But it was during the war that the business of sending Master's theses overseas was stopped; a ship went down with some in [laughs]. That's tradition; it may be fiction; I have no idea. (interview W-3-3-88:110).

After the war the individual New Zealand university colleges gradually assumed de facto responsibility for examining their own students, and the practice of appointing overseas examiners was officially abolished in 1962, when the University of New Zealand was dissolved and its constituent colleges became independent degree-granting universities (Dakin 1973:30; McLaren 1974:21; Encyclopedia of New Zealand 1966:549-551). However, the date of capping remained fixed at the end of the first term.

There are three reasons for this inertia, this holding on to an archaic and apparently irrational date for capping. The first reason is logistical. According to the Registrar, W.E. Harvey, all that time is needed to grade the examinations, Honours theses, and the like and to make preparations for the capping ceremony (for example, Dr. Harvey signs all diplomas himself by hand). However--as Dr. Harvey admitted himself--these are not compelling reasons when one considers the example of

universities in the United States, or even of Cambridge (interview W-3-31-88:394). If New Zealand academics put their minds to it, there is no reason why they could not perform all these tasks in less than the five months that they devote to it at present. The logistical reasons are simply a rationalization for keeping the traditional date.

By clinging so tenaciously to this survival from the nation's colonial past, New Zealand academics seem to recognize its value as a genuine indigenous tradition. The traditional date is kept simply because it is traditional, because it provides a link with the university's, indeed the country's past, and with the historical conditions that obtained when the university was founded. In the ex-colonial, provincial (Simms 1986:13-19) context in which New Zealand universities exist, added to the need for a link to the past is the desire for tradition--almost any tradition--that is indisputably of New Zealand, not imported, like so many others, from Britain. The prevalence among university members and former students of the narratives explaining the date of capping supports this traditionalizing explanation. These stories depict the date of capping as a direct link with the storied past. The particular detail of ships sailing slowly from one side of the globe to the other is a reminder of the rugged colonial past that New Zealanders often like to refer to as the source of their national character. The narrative also depicts the dogged determination of New Zealanders to overcome "the tyranny of distance" in order to keep their ties to "Home" and to maintain civilized standards, in this case in the field of higher education. Today these ties may seem anachronistic and foolish to some, but to others they remain a demonstration of loyalty. In either case the anachronistic date of capping is a home-

grown example of tradition kept for tradition's sake, something that many New Zealanders feel is lacking in their culture as a whole.

The accompanying explanatory legend frames the custom as having authentic roots in the local experience. Some narrators present the explanatory account for the date of capping matter-of-factly, like Nigel Mander: "The reason for the delay between the final exam results and the ceremony," he explained, "is because the final exams used to all be sent to Britain by sea for marking, and it took six months to get the results back; and the tradition has carried on" (W-2-15-88). Other narrators are skeptical about the tradition, as Gordon Tait's ironic reference to "days of yore" suggests; however he retold the story despite his apparent skepticism. In fact his account is one of the most detailed.

Today's date of capping (late April or early May) is not the original one. Until the 1920s graduation ceremonies at Victoria were held in late June, which was the end of the first term of the academic year. This fact does not invalidate the argument, however. The concept of "invented tradition" alerts us that the important thing is not whether or not the connection to the past is authentic, but the fact that a connection is deliberately insisted upon and foregrounded (Hobsbawm 1983:2).

Why Study Capping?

For a folklorist to devote a dissertation to the practices of New Zealand university students, who are mostly white and middle-class, is unusual in several

respects. To New Zealanders such a choice will seem odd because they are accustomed to thinking that New Zealand has little or no folklore of its own, at least not among the pakeha (white) population. We find a typical example of this commonplace assumption in the introduction to an anthology of recent New Zealand fiction:

As they read the writers of almost any other country, New Zealand pakehas may feel dismayed at how much there is to draw on there, which most of us here must do without. Little folklore, for example. Nothing in the way of songs or traditional music that is really our own. No festivals in any true sense. No traditions of marvelous exaggeration or rhetoric or satire or regionalism (O'Sullivan 1983:xxxiii).

Similarly, Koenraad Kuiper blames the almost non-existent state of folklore study in New Zealand on this commonplace assumption. "White New Zealanders who travel overseas," he comments, "are often conscious of a sense of shame or sorrow that they do not have a culture like people elsewhere." Hence, "The folklore of pakeha ethnic groups is subject to sparse scrutiny. It is generally held...that the pakeha has no culture" (1991:7).

This cultural inferiority complex is a product of the colonial heritage of New Zealand and Australia. In Australian studies the phrase "cultural cringe" has been in use since 1950 to refer to the pervasive attitude that local culture is an inferior derivative or imitation of British, European, and American arts and sciences, and that no truly indigenous alternative exists besides that of the indigenous populations. This phrase is also used of New Zealand (Ashton-Warner 1979:412; Factor 1988:29). In the case of New Zealand, the bulk of the population migrated from Britain and

deliberately brought British social institutions with them. Since that time these institutions have been carefully preserved, and for most of its history pakeha New Zealanders customarily thought of themselves as British. In terms of the world order New Zealand is a relatively unimportant provincial center, and its inhabitants have been accustomed to locating the source of their culture in the metropolises of Europe and North America.

This study was motivated in part by a desire to show that indeed there is true indigenous pakeha folklore in New Zealand. This assertion will seem unremarkable to American folklorists, who at least since the 1960s have defined their field of study in such a way that it is found among virtually every group of people whatsoever (Dundes 1966:232-233). According to the current paradigm, pakehas have just as much folklore as any other ethnic group. Moreover, groups such as middle-class, highly-educated university students are recognized as being equally within the purview of the folklorist as other more socially marginalized groups. In practice, however, folklorists have paid less attention to groups at the center of society than to those more distant from themselves in terms of class, occupation, and education.

Richard Dorson was the first American folklorist to consider the folklore of the college student. In an article first published in 1959 and reprinted many times since then, he argued that "the enterprising folklorist need not journey into the back hills to scoop up tradition. He can set up his recording machine in the smokeshop or the union grill" (1977:267). Since then many folklorists have studied the traditions of their students, and many have encouraged their students to collect their own lore.

This activity has resulted in numerous articles in folklore journals and masses of material being deposited in university folklore archives around the country. Much of this work has been gathered together in a recent compilation by Simon Bronner (1990). However, the theoretical character of most of this work in college folklore has lagged behind the rest of folklore theory, and frequently has remained arrested at the stage reached by Dorson more than thirty years ago, in which the main point of novelty was the very idea that college students did have folklore. In a recent survey article, Ronald Baker has called for a less survey- and item-oriented and more intensive analysis of the traditional life of college students (1983:113).

Sources.

Between January and June of 1988 I lived in a student flat near Victoria University and collected information about capping. My main sources of written information were student and city newspapers and archives. In addition I conducted thirty hours of formal interviews with university students and administrators, and with graduates of the university who were living in or near Wellington.

A major source of data on capping were the student newspapers Spike¹ and its successor, Salient². Every year Spike published a report of capping: the graduation

¹ Spike was published by the Victoria University Students' Association twice annually from 1902 - 1936; thereafter it was published once annually until 1949. Between 1949 - 1961 it appeared every three or four years, mainly as a literary magazine.

² Salient, a weekly newspaper also published by the Students' Association, began in 1937 and continues today. Since 196- it has been distributed free to students.

ceremony, the procession, and the capping concert. In later years it featured a number of retrospective articles on the capping shows. Since Salient appears more frequently, it contains detailed accounts not only of capping but also of the extensive planning that went into it each year and sometimes also of the controversies that erupted over it. Both magazines also reveal contemporary student opinions, whether in letters to the editor, reviews, or editorials.

Another important source for the student perspective on capping were the files of the Weir House Residents' Association. Founded in 1936, Weir House was the only all-male hostel for the university, and since its founding the residents' association has kept files of its correspondence, accounts, and annual house magazines. "Weir-men" took an active part in capping, and their exploits were recorded at length in their magazine.

The Students' Association also kept files of its activities; they were packed in no particular order in boxes stored in a closet. An afternoon spent rummaging through those boxes produced annual reports, accounts, and some original documents from capping in the 1960s and '70s that were very informative about the organizational and monetary dimensions of capping³. Some of the responses of University administration and faculty were to be found in the minutes of Professorial Board meetings, which were stored in a walk-in safe in the basement of the registry. Perched on the edge of a table bearing the University seal, next to a rack of

³ The files from before 1960 had been dumped in 1962 when the Association moved into the new Union building, according to John McCreary.

graduation gowns, I felt that the surroundings were particularly appropriate for a researcher on university customs.

Venturing from the libraries and archives, I had a lot of luck in locating current and former students for interviews. Even during casual conversations with old friends and teachers at the university, the mention of my topic immediately induced anecdotes, legends, and reminiscences. I was struck by the enthusiasm which people showed for the project, and the great lengths to which so many people went to help me. Many informants told me that they thought capping cried out for documentation; indeed some of them had planned to do so themselves, but the plans had never eventuated.

My informants among Victoria graduates ranged from young people who had been undergraduates at the same time I was, 1977-80, to octogenarians who had been students in the 1920s. I addressed meetings of the New Zealand Association of University Women, where I received a lot of information from the floor.

Many people not only agreed to interviews, but also loaned or gave me numerous photographs, scripts, recordings, and other material. For example, when I first visited Bill Sheat, whose involvement in capping Extravaganzas lasted for over ten years, I arrived to find his dining room table literally covered with boxes he had dragged out of the basement, which contained scripts, photographs, and recordings of capping shows, old issues of Cappicade, and even scripts and photographs dating to 1913 that had belonged to his father and father-in-law. For several months, he generously allowed me the run of this material, and patiently submitted to my

interrogations and requests for detailed exegesis on the scripts of extravaganzas that he had produced.

To get the town view, I consulted backfiles of Wellington's morning and evening newspapers, the Dominion and the Evening Post. In addition to frequent pictures and stories on capping, both papers contain editorials and letters to the editor expressing strong sentiments either against or in favor of it. Some of this material was in files of university-related newspaper clippings kept in the university library⁴. Other material I found by going directly to the newspapers themselves. Due to time constraints, my coverage of this source is by no means exhaustive, but enough to be suggestive.

Since the Wellington City Corporation was the body authorized to extend or deny students permission to hold capping events in the streets, their files were a valuable source of accurate information on which events were allowed to take place and which were not. They had kept letters of application, replies, and also news clippings, minutes, and other correspondence related to capping, particularly when student street activities aroused controversy or caused property damage.

It proved impractical to interview many members of the public who were not also university graduates. No members of the public came forward after I had publicized my project in the press and on radio. The only non-students whom I was able to interview formally were a few university staff members, who had very strong

⁴ Sansum, Harry. Press Clippings 1922 To 1979; Wright, Lindsay, Victoria University of Wellington Press Clippings.

opinions about capping and its deterioration in their lifetime. I also interviewed members of the police and the city administration, who gave me their opinions of capping from an official perspective. In future, a widely-distributed questionnaire might be used to survey non-university perspectives on capping.

The History of a Festival.

In choosing capping as a topic for my dissertation, I was relying on my experience as an undergraduate at Victoria University in the late 1970s. Capping burst onto the scene two months into my first year offering a variety of activities that relieved the normal daily round of lectures and study. Like other students, I went to the capping revues that were performed in the small theater on campus, and attended numerous dances that were scheduled for capping. From fellow students I heard stories about student exploits in cappings past. My roommates and I planned to perform some capping stunts of our own, but they never got off the ground.

Throughout capping week, students from a university in another town were on the city streets selling their capping magazine. I remembered seeing such magazines passed from hand to hand in my high school; they were infamous for their obscenity and the subject of many letters to the editor. I heard that Victoria's capping magazine, Cappicade, had ceased publication years before because the students had finally stretched the obscenity and libel laws too far. Perhaps the most controversial capping events in my student days were the massive pub crawls that visited all of the city's numerous bars. In 1977 one bar manager refused to admit the 200 drunken

students who arrived at his door, setting off an ugly scene in which the police were called to restore order and which was featured prominently in both city dailies the next day.

My experience of capping in the late 1970s was probably typical for a female student at the time. I participated actively in a few events, was present as an audience member at others, and kept my distance from others, notably the rowdy drinking events. While capping events unfolded, my friends and I participated in an informal oral culture in which we retold favorite stories of the best capping activities of the past and commented upon the actions of those more centrally involved. Without being actively involved as performers or organizers, we felt that this event belonged to us and reflected the best qualities common to the student body in contrast to the rest of the population, namely wit, education, and a healthy dose of iconoclasm.

Recalling these experiences later, I was certain that in capping I had a lively traditional custom that not only fit the definition of folklore but also had never been documented before. Accordingly, in 1988 I returned to my alma mater to take part in capping week once again, only this time as a fieldworker. Within a few days of my arrival, however, I was dismayed to learn from students and faculty that capping at Victoria was "all but dead." I soon found out that the event I remembered from just five years before was now deemed to be in need of revival. 1988 featured a capping show, the first after a hiatus of some years. Plans were afoot to bring back the capping ball and other events that had lapsed. Not only had capping declined from

the way it had been in 1977, but, as I learned from older graduates of the university, capping had formerly included numerous customs that I had not known existed.

What had happened to capping? Most people agreed that today's capping was a debased and pale version of its past glories. They offered various reasons for the decline of the event, but the most common explanation centered around the licentious behavior of the students. They had "gone over the top;" they had become too drunk, too obscene, and too offensive; and the inevitable (and entirely appropriate, according to some people) consequence was that one after another all the capping events were banned. This version of the history and decline of capping was offered to me by students, ex-students, faculty and members of the public alike.

This study is concerned with several questions that the history of capping raises. First, how did New Zealand university students obtain and keep the license to engage in such acts of public mockery? Capping closely resembles customs that have been labelled "ritual reversal," the carnivalesque, and ritual humor in anthropological literature. However, these practices are usually located either in the past, in the case of Europe, or else in non-industrialized small-scale societies. Far from being practiced in out of the way places by marginal people separated from the centers of power and learning, capping takes place in the capital city of a modern complex society, the type of field site that traditionally has held little interest for anthropologists or folklorists. The practitioners of this tradition of ritual humor are among the best-educated, privileged, and potentially most powerful members of that society. Capping does not belong to the margins of New Zealand, but to its center.

How to explain not simply the survival, but the thriving of ritual humor in this context, which intellectual prejudices would consider extremely unfavorable conditions?

Another issue concerns the causes of change in folk custom. Capping has changed remarkably in the almost ninety years of its existence. Investigating the probable reasons for this change, I found that the emic assumptions of capping's audiences and performers and the intellectual assumptions of some folklore theory were equally lacking. Both sets of explanation tend to view the change in traditional custom in devolutionary terms, in which all change is interpreted as deterioration and as being caused by the workings of external circumstances on custom, despite the active choices made by participants. Instead I argue that while major socio-economic, demographic, and ideological changes in the city at large have produced a change in custom, the direct and immediate agents of change were the deliberate choices and agency of the participants and organizers.

Throughout the writing of this study, I have had to resist the tendency to describe the transformation of capping as the "decline," "rise and fall," or "death of a festival." This temptation derives in part from the nature of the data that I collected about the present and former forms of the event, in part from the attitudes of many of my informants to the history of capping. In part also this tendency derives from a prevailing intellectual prejudice in folklore scholarship. Briefly, the facts are that capping in the 1980s is on a much smaller scale than it was formerly. Several events that had been part of capping, notably the capping magazine, the students' procession,

and the Extravaganza, to name a few, are no longer a part of the program. In terms of the sheer numbers of people involved either as active participants or as spectators, capping today is on a smaller scale than it once was.

The words we use to describe and label these observed changes reveal implicit attitudes about the nature of popular custom and the way it changes. Folklorists have been criticized, and also have not failed to castigate themselves, for being unduly interested in customs and expressive forms that are old, dying out, threatened with imminent extinction. Their fieldwork has been characterized as salvage operations designed to rescue and preserve these threatened practices before it was too late. In part, this outlook towards the materials of folklore stems from the romantic motivations, resisting the overweening rise of modernity in Europe, that gave rise to the discipline of folklore in the first place (Dundes 1969). Alan Dundes has identified a prevailing "devolutionary premise" in folkloristics, which refers to this fascination with the old and the threatened. As he explains, this bias in the collection, identification, and definition of folklore material betrays an underlying assumption about the nature of folkloric change. This prevailing--or once prevailing--assumption is the belief that folklore inevitably changes for the worse; it undergoes a relentless path of decline, so that the older and earlier forms of any tradition are thought to be superior to later ones. The reasons suggested to explain this deterioration are various. The inferiority of oral tradition as a means of reproducing culture is one suggested cause. Another approach, more in sympathy with folklore forms, is the argument that

folklore is the inevitable victim of the forces of industrialization, modernity, and mass education.

The tendency to describe the changes in capping as a decline, or even the death, of the tradition, is understandable given the overwhelming frequency of such terminology in folkloristic discourse. However similar attitudes and assumptions were apparent in the emic discourse of many of my informants; they too most often saw the history of capping in devolutionary terms. As I argue with respect to the students' procession, these assumptions are largely unfounded in this case.

I have strenuously avoided talking about the "decline" of capping, for a variety of reasons. The first one is a matter of personal bias; I would count myself among the supporters of capping, just as I am a believer in the value of humor, including ritual humor, generally. Accordingly I am loath to admit that such a flourishing example of ritual humor in a modern secular context has gone from us, that the killjoys of modernity have triumphed again.

There are other, more objective reasons to avoid devolutionary-style discourse, however. In the first place, to describe the change in capping in terms of a decline implies that what is left is inferior to the old forms. While there are some people among past and present Victoria students who would agree with this assessment, there are many others who would not. Looked at with 1980s eyes, the smaller capping of the present is an improvement on its old unreconstructed form. Capping today lacks several features that are now recognized as being objectionable because of their racist, sexist, and classist implications.

Furthermore, any approach that treats changes in popular custom in terms of decline or devolution does not give due consideration to the agency of folklore practitioners. The use of terms such as "decline," "dead," and "dying out,"--no less than their opposites, such as "thriving," make use an animistic metaphor. This type of language treats customs if they had a life of their own. Alternatively, customs are described as the passive victims of external forces, being worked upon by processes of modernization and the like. Both discourses ignore the active role of practitioners in not only perpetuating, but also transforming their traditional practices. Customs may disappear despite the desires and efforts of practitioners; however this need not be the case with all customs. In other cases, change in traditional practices is brought about by the practitioners themselves (not merely "tradition bearers"), who deliberately and thoughtfully abandon some practices and modify others. These changes are made both in response to changing external circumstances, but sometimes also in order to try and influence the outside context as well. Practitioners actively transform tradition; they do this not only in response to the workings of external circumstances on them, but also in efforts to change the outside world.



Figure 1 Champagne Breakfast revellers in Midland Park, Wellington, 1988.

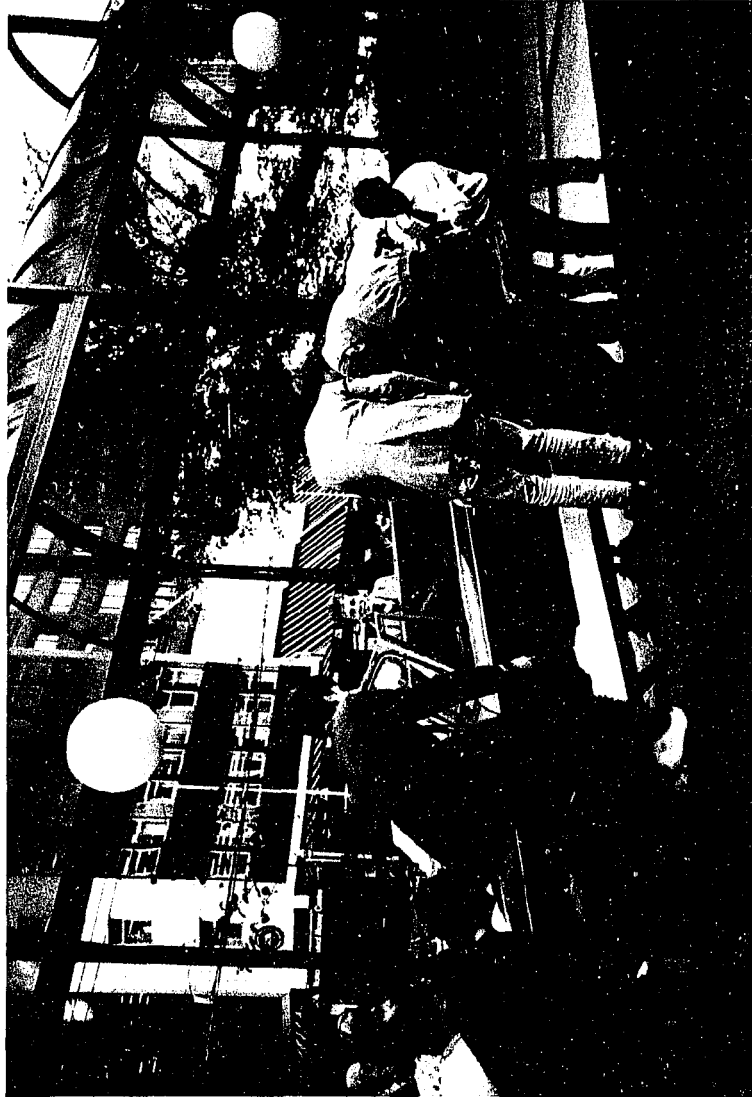


Figure 2 A car is kidnapped...



Figure 3 ...and transformed into the Best-Dressed Table.



Figure 4 Runner-up to the Best-Dressed Table.

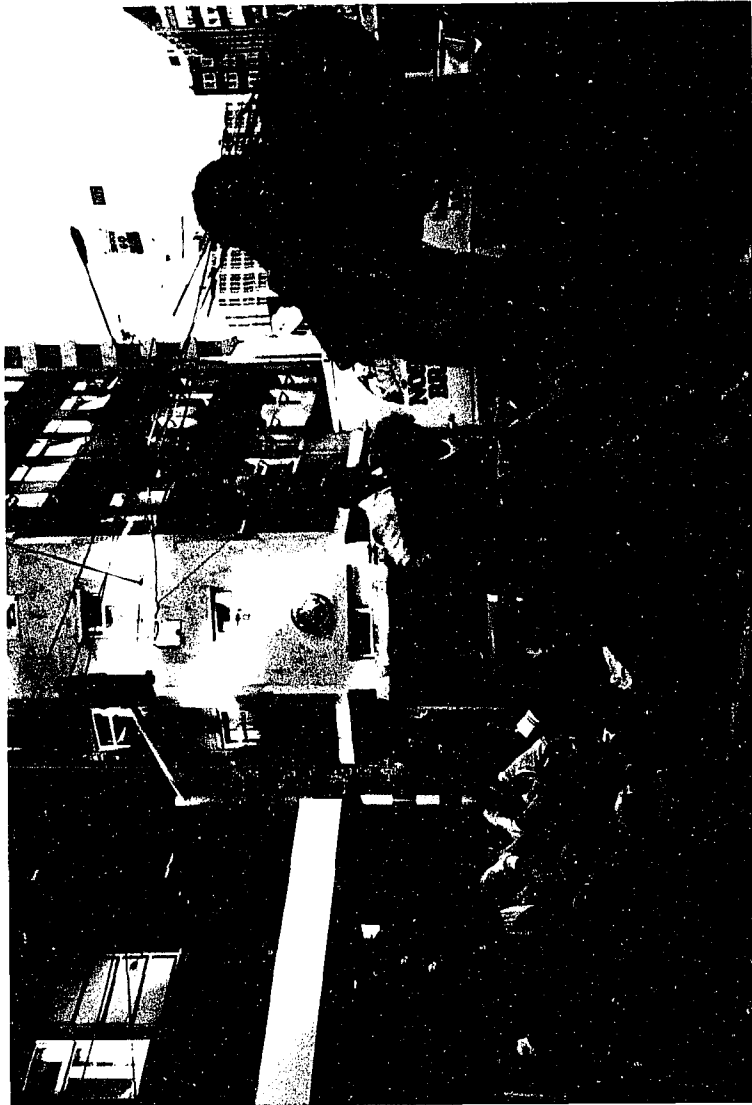


Figure 5 Invasion of the dead ants.

CHAPTER TWO

RITUAL AND FESTIVAL

The two parts of capping--the serious graduation ceremony, and the playful student celebrations--appear to be opposites. Their conjunction in one occasion immediately pricks the scholarly urge to classify and find dichotomies, to produce an account that lines up the two sides of capping into a series of paired contrasting elements, in which the serious is paired with the ludic, the official with the unofficial, the formal with the informal, the hegemonic with the counter-hegemonic, structure with anti-structure.

Nothing seems more obvious than that ritual and celebration are complete opposites. This dichotomy corresponds to the pervasive distinction in modern western culture between the serious and the trivial, between work and play. In English-speaking cultures, it is almost automatic to consider ritual and festival as opposites: rituals are serious and taken seriously, while festivals are done for the fun of it (Abrahams 1987).

In anthropological writing, however, this distinction is rarely observed. Edmund Leach, for example, uses the terms ritual and festival interchangeably (1979

[1961]). A recent collection of symposium papers on "secular ritual" includes studies of Carnival and birthday parties (Moore and Myerhoff 1977). Similarly, the entry for "Religion and Ritual" in the *Social Science Encyclopedia* lists carnival as an instance of ritual (Bloch 1985:699). Roberto Da Matta begins a study of *Carnaval* in Brazil by asking whether Carnival should be considered a ritual, suggesting that we have difficulty in identifying this kind of event as a ritual because it is explicitly purposeless; however he continues by treating it as a ritual (1986); and Sydel Silverman calls the Palio of Siena a ritual (1981). Most often however, as Stanley Brandes and Robert J. Smith have observed, anthropologists usually do not use the term "festival" at all, having subsumed this type of event under the all-embracing category of ritual (Brandes 1988:6-9; Smith 1975:3-5).

Some anthropologists, such as Victor Turner, Monica Wilson, and Max Gluckman, have suggested that the term "ritual" be reserved for events with an explicitly religious or magical dimension, using the term *ceremony* for more secular events (cited in Abrahams 1974:27-29; Moore and Myerhoff 1977:21). Leach, on the other hand, argues that there is no practical difference between ritual and ceremony; and Roy Rappaport (1989:467) argues that the distinction is based on the content of the event, not its form. Rappaport defines ritual as a distinct characteristic form, namely, "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers;" this form is the same in both religious and secular uses (1989:467).

The profusion of diverse events that the concept "ritual" encompasses, and the lack of consensus over the precise meaning of the term, have often been noted (La Fontaine 1985:11; Leach 1979 [1966]:230). Part of the problem is that the characteristics that are most often agreed upon as belonging to ritual, namely a symbolic or communicative dimension, and the formal feature of repetition, redundancy, and patterning, can be found in almost all social behavior. Thus there is talk of the rituals of everyday life, as for example in the work of Erving Goffman.

The apparently endless expansion of the class of things denoted by the term ritual in anthropological writing has led some observers, notably Jack Goody (1977), to question the usefulness of the concept, since it no longer seems to designate anything more specific than the totality of patterned social behavior (see also Da Matta 1977:257). So many diverse phenomena qualify as ritual that no single theory or approach can account for them all, even though the use of the same term for them all implies that "there is some key we can discover that will unlock this universe of social action, some common code that will reveal all to the enquiring mind" (Goody 1977:28).

One response to these terminological and definitional problems is to abandon such universal analytic categories as "ritual" or "festival" in favor of the local native terms. This is the approach taken by Brandes in his study of the Mexican fiesta (1988). However, analytic categories cannot be avoided forever if we are to say something meaningful about specific events that has relevance beyond the local scene. We will want to compare the local phenomenon to other similar events, and to try out

on the data at hand the analyses and theories developed in other contexts.

Accordingly, some broader categories are needed to ensure that we are comparing phenomena that are in fact comparable.

The Folkloristic Study of Festival

Folklorists have most often treated festival as separate from ritual (Brandes 1988; Smith 1975). They have tended to ignore ritual in the past, because it was conceived as belonging to "official" culture rather than "folk" culture, and as too unchanging and formalized to be of interest to folklorists. Moreover, the folkloristic study of festival has undergone a resurgence of interest since 1970.¹

One of the earliest studies of festival by an American folklorist is Robert J. Smith's dissertation on patronal fiesta in Peru. He began his study with the remark that "in the United States the study of folk festivals is neglected, perhaps as a reflection of their steadily decreasing importance in American life," unlike Latin American and Catholic European countries, where festivals remain important events (1968:1). A few years after this study was completed, however, folklorists in America began to revise their opinion about the fate of festival and to study it. John Gutowski's 1977 study of the Turtle Day Festival in Churubusco, Indiana was one of

¹ Some of the studies of festival and allied forms done by American folklorists in the 1970s include Danielson 1972; Smith 1972; a special issue of Western Folklore devoted to festival (1972); the Forms of Symbolic Inversion Symposium at 1972 meeting of the American Anthropological Association, published in Babcock 1978; the 1973 Wenner-Gren conference on Ritual: Reconciliation and Change, which included Abrahams 1974; Dundes and Falassi's book length study of the Palio (1975); and Beverly Stoeltje's 1979 dissertation on rodeo.

the first to study an indigenous American community festival that was of recent invention. Gutowski reviewed the reasons why so few studies of modern American festivals existed at that time; "Either the festival has been pronounced dead," he said, "or, in cases of survival, it has been judged unimportant in American life and inconsequential for American folklore study" (1977:211-212).

The reason for this neglect was not, as Smith had earlier assumed, because there were no festivals in America, but because the events that did exist did not fit into the current canon of folklore forms. Some events, like Mardi Gras, were too urban, sophisticated, and influenced by commercial and tourist interests to qualify as authentic folklore, as it was conceived at the time. Smaller community festivals that had been invented in this century (according to Larry Danielson (1972), a great many ethnic and community festivals were instituted in the United States since 1940) were similarly rejected precisely because they were deliberately invented (Gutowski 1977:210-215). Since that time, however, the old folklore canon has been challenged and the assumptions on which it rested thrown out. Folklorists no longer rely on the model of the small folk society; they are comfortable with urban contexts as well as with large-scale events (Abrahams 1981). They have also grown to appreciate the agency of the folk in the creation and transmission of their lore, abandoning unstated assumptions that folk events were somehow spontaneous and essentially unchanged from their original forms in prehistory; thus events that are carefully organized and deliberately instituted are also within the sphere of interest of contemporary folklorists.

The renaissance of festival study in the 1970s reflected a change of emphasis more than a change of subject matter in some cases, for folklorists had been studying festivals from the earliest days of the discipline, under the rubric of *calendar customs*. These, especially in peasant and rural contexts, were collected and analyzed by the British antiquarians, as well as students of anthropology and comparative religion such as Lang, Tylor, Frazer, and Mannhardt. The interests of these scholars led them to emphasize the roots of folk customs in the past, rather than their functions in the present; customs were viewed as survivals of and evidence for ancient and primitive religion. (see Magliocco 1988:33-37; Smith 1972a for a review of this literature).

The difference between a festival and a calendar custom is hard to discern definitively. Jan Brunvand, in an introductory textbook, suggests that a festival is merely a calendar custom with more community participation and more elaborate celebrations (1978:244-258). In another textbook introduction, Robert J. Smith (1972a) defines festivals as periodic moments of special significance to a community that are set aside for celebration. His discussion encompasses seasonal festivals, Christian calendar festivals, and "limited participation festivals," the latter being celebrations for groups smaller than an entire community, such as organizations, fraternal groups, and families, and including rites of passage for individuals. Smith thus includes calendar customs, private celebrations, and customs accompanying rites of passage, as well as large scale community festivals and national celebrations such as the Fourth of July.

Frank Manning (1983) describes a concept of "celebrations," which are large scale events that involve performance, entertainment, and are public and participatory. This is a broad category that includes official spectacles as well as festivals.

Part of the difficulty in defining "festival" is due to the tendency to treat one event, such as Carnival, Saturnalia,² or the Feast of Fools, as paradigmatic of all festivals. Beverly Stoeltje (1983; 1989) has developed a concept of festival as a special folk genre, delineating the shared characteristics that underlie a wide diversity of public events, rather than privileging any single member of this class as the defining form. According to this definition, festivals "occur at calendrically regulated intervals and are public in nature, participatory in ethos, complex in structure, and multiple in voice, scene, and purpose" (1989:161). Similarly, Alessandro Falassi states that festival has been conceived of as

a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview (1987:2).

The participatory criterion is used to distinguish authentic folk festivals from purely commercial productions, which although they may be billed as festivals and

² The ancient Roman Saturnalia featured role reversal, such as those between master and slave (Fuhrmann 1980); thus contemporary festivals in which reversals are found are sometimes called "Saturnalias" (Babcock 1978:22; Wallace 1966:135-138). Although Saturnalia is often taken to be the direct antecedent of the European Carnival (e.g. Bakhtin 1984:6-8), there is no documentary evidence for this (Kinser 1986:33 n.1; Wagner 1986:83-85).

exhibit festive elements, do not enlist the active participation of community members. "If those in attendance are primarily observers and consumers rather than participants, the event is not based in the social life of the community" (Stoeltje 1989:163-164). Thus events whose form is dictated solely by the profit motive, or by the interests of national rather than local community concerns, are treated as separate phenomena. Because of the community-based quality of the festival, it is considered to reflect the concerns and experience of the community. "The vital festival," says Stoeltje, "encapsulates elements of shared experience in public presentation" (1983:239).

The festival genre is distinguished from other calendar customs by its scale and complexity. This definition excludes the private festivities of small groups such as families. The festival is defined as a complex event that incorporates a multiplicity of other folklore forms, genres, and practices, including rituals, drama, and contests, which are arranged into an organized and agreed upon order (a festival program). These events should be studied within the context of the festival as a whole, rather than focussing on one or the other separately (cf Smith 1972a:168-170).

Intellectual Precursors To Festival Study

Although festival has been studied before, usually under the rubric of rituals (by anthropologists) or calendar customs (by folklorists), the renewed interest in this genre from the 1970s represents a major shift in the way the topic is approached. The new approach combines the following three elements. Festival is conceived as a separate category

from ritual, and the great urban carnivals of Europe have become influential models. Secondly, perhaps the major point of interest in festival is its disorderly, inversive, and playful element, which has become an important target of scholarly interest in its own right along with other disorderly and disorganizing themes in expressive culture.

Rehabilitation of the European Festival

One reason for the former disinterest in festivals as such is that in western culture generally festive behavior had a bad name. While rituals are associated with the solemn, serious, and important side of life, festivals have been consigned to the realm of the playful, trivial, and immoral. The ascendancy of modernity, industrialization, and the protestant ethic is accompanied by a devaluation of behavior that is sensual, humorous, playful--in the sense of not being directed toward any goal other than itself; such behavior is commonly considered at best trivial and fit only for children; and at worst immoral, socially and spiritually dangerous (Bauman 1987; Burke 1978:207-243). Festive behavior consists largely of just this kind of thing. Festivals have been condemned as wasteful of time and resources; as encouraging sinful and lewd behavior, and as exalting the animalistic at the expense of the rational.

Historians of Carnival in Europe have repeatedly shown how opinion turned against festivity and related forms. The anti-festivity ethic was at first confined to an educated minority. With the rise of the middle class, this attitude became a part of

their bourgeois aesthetic, which opposed festive forms on the grounds of taste and morality, and sought to eliminate or at least moderate its manifestations in the behavior of the lower classes. A practical result of this development was the "contraction" of festivals (to use Wagner's (1986) term); the number of holidays was reduced, Carnival becoming the pre-eminent survivor; and Carnival activities became increasingly controlled (Burke 1978:207-243; Smith 1972:294-297; Wagner 1986).

Three scholars--Josef Pieper, Harvey Cox, and Mikhail Bakhtin--have been influential in rehabilitating carnival, play, and fantasy as being both desirable, necessary, and worthy of serious study. Josef Pieper's In Tune with the World (1965) presented a theory of festivity that emphasized the antithesis between everyday life and the festival, the latter characterized by spontaneity, absence of goal-oriented behavior, lavishness, and the abolition of social differences. Pieper sought to restore festivity to respectability by emphasizing its essentially religious spirit; true festivity, he said, is neither reducible to mere meaningless play, nor characterized by senseless waste. The forces of commercialization and atheism are blamed for a diminution in true festivity in the modern world; "artificial" festivals instituted by human law are denounced as almost anti-festivals. True festivity is explained as essentially religious praise; it allows us to depart from the here and now and approach god and the sacred, thus gaining a wider perception of the everyday. "To celebrate a festival," says Pieper, "means, to live out, for some special occasion in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole" (1965:23).

Strongly influenced by Pieper, American theologian Harvey Cox published his popular study, The Feast of Fools, in 1969. Cox described the ingredients of festivity as excess, celebrative affirmation (that is, Pieper's notion of the universal assent to the world), and a quality of juxtaposition or antithesis to everyday life (21-26). Like Pieper, he felt that festivity was "in a dismal state" (8) in contemporary Western society, due to industrialization, the decline of religion, and the rise of the work ethic that devalued festivity and fantasy:

festivity and fantasy do play a less central role among us now than they did in the days of holy fools, mystical visionaries, and a calendar full of festivals. And we are the poorer for it....whatever forms of festivity and fantasy remain to us are shrunken and insulated. Our celebrations do not relate us, as they once did, to the parade of cosmic history or to the great stories of man's spiritual quest (1969:4).

Cox argues that festivity and fantasy are essential to human nature. Although largely lost in western middle class life, he argues, they were once a prominent part of medieval European culture (exemplified in the Feast of Fools), and are still practiced by minorities and in the Third World. He calls for a renaissance of these lost arts in modern life and in modern Christianity, a renaissance that he notes is already beginning at the time of writing. Indeed both the writing and popular reception of Cox's book can be seen as part of the 1960s counter-cultural movements, which included the appreciation and promotion of play, fantasy, and festivity.

The third event that encouraged the rehabilitation of the festival in the social sciences was the 1968 translation into English of Mikhail Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World. Bakhtin argues that the way to an appreciation of Rabelais lay in

understanding his sources in popular culture, especially folk humor. Bakhtin's work aims to rehabilitate both Rabelais and folk culture, particularly the parts of folk culture hitherto neglected in the Romantic conception of folklore--namely humor and the grotesque. For Bakhtin, the preeminent locus for these forms of popular culture is Carnival.

Bakhtin provides a model for the ideal type of festival, using Carnival as the paradigmatic form. Other festive occasions, such as charivari and the Feast of Fools, are said to have deteriorated or even vanished, while Carnival continued. "The forms of folk merriment that were dying or degenerating transmitted some of their traits to the carnival celebrations: rituals, paraphernalia, images, masques. These celebrations became a reservoir into which obsolete genres were emptied" (1984:218), and thus "Carnival became the symbol and incarnation of the true folk festival" (220).

One of the themes in this work is "carnivalization" in literature; that is, the use of carnivalesque themes and styles in literary works, especially the novel (Babcock-Abrahams 1974). Since Bakhtin's account of Carnival is based on literary sources, we can say that he has achieved the carnivalization (or novelization) of carnival: that is, the imputation of an idealized set of characteristics, derived from literature, to a social phenomenon. This image of Carnival has been extremely influential in recent studies of the festival.

The "novelized" carnival is an idealized carnival, one that Bakhtin constructed from literary sources and a somewhat naive populism, which glorifies the grotesque aesthetic attributed to the people. This vision de-emphasizes the more problematic

elements that are found in actual carnivals, such as violence, conflict, and a lack of the universal if boisterous good humor that Bakhtin describes (La Capra 1983:291-324).

Cox and Pieper similarly create idealized models of "true festivity," but their vision is very different from Bakhtin's. The carnivalesque and grotesque aesthetic that is central to Bakhtin's Rabelaisian festival is almost entirely absent from the theologians' model. Pieper does not mention such matters at all. Cox describes the death of his exemplary festival, the Feast of Fools, as a loss; but in a brief and telling aside he admits that "often it did degenerate into debauchery and lewd bufoonery," suggesting that the loss of these elements will not be mourned (1969:3).

This brief and tasteful reference to behaviors that the theologian evidently found distasteful is a far cry from Bakhtin's direct and detailed approach. Bakhtin's work celebrates and revalidates the grotesque, obscene, and gross elements of popular culture that the modern bourgeois aesthetic banished to the realms of vulgarity, bad taste. Although he desired to rehabilitate festivity, Cox could not entirely escape this same bourgeois aesthetic, as illustrated by his "clean" model of festivity and his delicate reference to debauchery and lewdness. The bourgeois aesthetic has exercised a baleful influence over the paradigms of scholarship as well as over culture, rendering some of the most common characteristics of festivity unworthy of scholarly attention. Bakhtin's work is a corrective to that blind spot in scholarship.

Another important contribution of Bakhtin's model of the festival is his emphasis on the oppositional character of the carnivalesque. Carnavalesque occasions

are described as "sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (1984:5-6). To Bakhtin folk culture and the carnivalesque were permanently opposed to official culture, with a different outlook and ethos, characterized by humor, mockery, and parody, a grotesque aesthetic, the confusion of categories that official culture wished to keep separate, public settings, and an emphasis on change and relativity instead of permanence.

Man's Rage for Chaos ³

In his glorification of dirt, disorder, the grotesque and the unofficial, Bakhtin parallels a movement in anthropology since the second world war and especially since 1970, which focuses on the disorderly elements of culture. Prior to this movement, the mission of anthropology--particularly the British school of structural-functionalism--had been to demonstrate and explain the stability and persistence of society and culture. In his studies of "rites of rebellion" in Africa, Max Gluckman was one of the first anthropologists to focus specifically on disorder and conflict in culture (1955:109-136; 1963; Norbeck 1961; 1963). Gluckman's concern was to show how social structure and solidarity are maintained despite the conflicts and contradictions that regularly occur in society. Rites of rebellion, he argued, provided

³ The phrase is Morse Peckham's; it is cited in Babcock 1978:19.

bounded and controlled occasions for the harmless release of these potentially destructive forces that would otherwise threaten the established order.

Victor Turner, another influential figure in the study of ritual and festival, extended Gluckman's theories but also kept to the model of a homeostatic society that persisted despite--in fact, with the help of--moments of ritual disorder. Despite their interest in antistructural elements in culture and in ritual, both Gluckman and Turner viewed this disorder as momentary, as a necessary balance or periodic correction to the excesses of structure, and of limited capacity to bring about real dissolution of social systems. Disorder was thus incorporated into order, and its manifestations in rituals explained as contributing to the homeostasis of the social system. This approach contrasts with that of Bakhtin, for whom the disorder of carnival was a challenge to official structures, not a balance (Kelly and Kaplan 1990:136-139).

The aspect of Turner's work that has had perhaps the most influence for the study of festival is his elaboration of the work of Van Gennep, particularly the hitherto neglected transitional, or *liminal*, period in rites of passage. During this stage, social structure is temporarily levelled (producing a type of social relationship that he dubbed *communitas*); and symbols are used in ways that transform and confuse normal cultural categories (1977; 1979 [1964]). Although liminality was originally conceived as being restricted to the transitional stage in rites of passage (Turner 1974:58-62), it has been applied much more widely, including studies of festivals in modern complex societies.

The 1960s structuralist movement in anthropology is another factor contributing to the 1970s interest in cultural disorder. The analysis of cultural systems of ordering the world into cognitive categories also directed attention to those phenomena that are anomalous in any particular cognitive scheme (as in Mary Douglas' Purity and Danger; Babcock-Abrahams 1975); and to the human propensity to not only to make order but also play with deliberate disorder in expressive forms that confuse, invert, and alter orderly structures, producing *symbolic inversion* or *ritual reversal* (Babcock 1978). The symposium on forms of symbolic inversion held at the 1972 meeting of the American Anthropological Association is evidence of the recent movement in anthropology and folklore that proceeds from the recognition that "people have a greater tolerance for disorder than anthropologists give them credit for" (Abrahams and Bauman 1978:207; cf Abrahams 1974:12-14). The renaissance of the study of festival is an important part of this broader movement.

Reflexivity and Cultural Performance

A common approach to both rituals and festivals is to treat them as *keys to culture*: that is, as privileged domains that reveal the key themes and concerns of the culture that produces them. In rituals people are thought to bring out and display the deepest, most important themes in their culture: the central tenets of their worldview and value systems. Various terms have been proposed to name the broad category of cultural events that operate this way, among them *enactment*, *display event*, *public event*, or *cultural performance*. All of these formulations begin with the observation

that people everywhere take part in events that are recognized as special occasions, and as departures from everyday life.

Roger Abrahams has constructed various typologies for these special events, which he has called at different times "performances," "enactments," and "display events" (1974; 1977; 1981). He defines an enactment as "any social event in which community members come together to participate, employ the deepest and most complex multivocal and polyvalent signs and symbols of their repertoires of expression thus entering into a potentially significant experience" (1977:80). Enactments encompass play and sports, performances, festivals, and rituals (1977:100-117). All enactments are named, recognizable, and repeatable departures from everyday life; hence people anticipate and plan for them, and know in advance how to act in them and what to expect from them.

Unlike everyday acts, Abrahams argues that enactments offer opportunities for heightened and intensified experience, an effect achieved by various means of transforming everyday codes. Moreover, these extraordinary experiences allow participants to see the ordinary world more clearly than usual. This approach rests on the paradox that events that depart from the everyday reveal more about the fundamental structures of the culture than the ordinary day to day living of it does:

Activities become unreal and yet more real at the same time; unreal because of the felt departure from the ordinary toward the more heightened, self-conscious and stylized behaviors of named and framed activities-in-common; more real because the events take the motives and scenes of the everyday and bring them into some new perspective, allowing us to see them as part of some larger patterns of existence (1977:80-81).

Similarly, Roberto Da Matta defines rituals (a category in which he includes both solemn ceremonies and festivals) as "instruments which give greater clarity to social messages," discourses about social reality, which use various modes to bring important elements of the society into close up. He identifies three such modes of discourse as reinforcement, inversion, and neutralization (1977:263).

What Abrahams calls enactments, Don Handelman (1990) has termed "public events." These are events that are formal, replicable, intentional, and symbolic. Like Abrahams and Da Matta, Handelman's central concern is the various ways in which public events represent the lived-in world within which they take place. He identifies three types of event based on their different relationships with the world outside, namely events that are models of the world and attempt to bring about changes in it; events that present axiomatic icons of the world, and events that re-present the world in transformed ways.

The term cultural performance was coined by Milton Singer to refer to those public events--artistic, religious, and ritual performances--that, in the opinion of the members of a group, encapsulate their culture in discrete events both for themselves and others (Singer 1972:67-80; 1959:xii-xiii). Cultural performances are scripted and organized; scheduled in advance; temporally and spatially bounded; and public, in that they are open to view by audiences and/or to collective participation (Bauman 1989; Stoeltje and Bauman 1988; MacAloon 1984). "In these events, culture is encapsulated, enacted, and placed on display for itself and for outsiders. Each performance constitutes a discrete complex event, characterized by a definite time

span, an organized program of activity, performers, audience, and occasion" (Bauman and Stoeltje 1988:589).

The two most significant qualities that are attributed to cultural performances are reflexivity and heightened experience. The latter characteristic refers to the way in which these events generate "a particular kind of attention, attention especially aroused, concentrated, and generalized" (MacAloon 1984:9). This claim should not be taken as literally true, as anyone knows who has sat through a tedious play or ceremony. Rather it means that the potential for cathexis, for heightened attention, is there. Similarly, it is best not to impose on the analysis of all cultural performances preconceived notions of attentive audience behavior from elite western performance contexts. Finally the notion of heightened experience is an analytic gloss for the native idea that these are in one way or another "special" events, that stand out from everyday life.

Perhaps the most important quality attributed to cultural performances is their reflexivity. "They are cultural forms about culture, social forms about society, in which the central meanings and values of a group are embodied, acted out, and laid open for examination and interpretation in symbolic form, both by members of that group and by the ethnographer" (Bauman 1986:133). This concept of cultural performance, and the type of analysis that it suggests, are equivalent to the idea of "cultural texts" put forward by Clifford Geertz in his influential essay on the Balinese cockfight, which he interprets as analogous to an art form; "a Balinese reading of

Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves" (Geertz 1971:26).

The key phrase here is themselves. Some scholars have questioned whether cultural performances are as enlightening to the participants as they are to ethnographers; in other words, whether they are truly reflexive. Bruce Kapferer, for instance, suggests that "while rituals might typically be regarded as reflexive events by anthropologists, it does not necessarily follow that they will be similarly regarded by participants" (1984:203). After all, anthropologists and folklorists are professional cultural analysts, who are accustomed to examining cultural forms more closely than participants themselves always do. For the participants, rituals, ceremonies, and festivals may actually inhibit reflexivity rather than being privileged occasions for the examination and consideration of their culture. Kapferer argues that during moments of deep play ritual participants are too deeply absorbed in what they are doing to be able to reflect on what it means; the same may be said for carnival celebrants who give themselves over to drunkenness and other physical pleasures. However, participants may have time to think about and reflect on their cultural performances at other times, perhaps when the event is over.

These objections remind us that the interpretation of cultural phenomena may be either emic or etic. Singer's initial formulation of the concept of cultural performance included the existence of both insider and outsider audiences; what has not always been clearly established is whether a particular interpretation is that of the outside observer or of the insider. Geertz's analysis of the Balinese cockfight has

been criticized for not including any native exegesis. His assertion that it is "a story they tell themselves about themselves" is subject to the same qualifications that are commonly made about conventional literary interpretation; that is, the meaning of the text is not the same for everyone. The Balinese cock fighters may see their "story" as being nothing more than a story about cockfights, rather than about Balinese social relations, as Geertz suggests. However, both interpretations are valid. Moreover, any cultural text undoubtedly has multiple interpretations, which are different for each participant and observer.

Jack Goody has argued strongly that even for outside observers, formal rituals do not provide especially useful insights into culture. "I suggest it is misleading to assert that 'rituals' provide a key to deep values more than any other type of human behaviour," he says. "Indeed, I would be tempted to argue that they conceivably provide less of a clue...[because of] their formality, the element of culture lag, the component of public demonstration, their role as masks of the 'true' self" (1977:32). Particularly in Western societies, Goody observes, many rituals are archaic and empty of meaning; they are repeated despite the fact that even the main participants do not know why things are being done this way, except that this is the way things are done. Moreover, there is no requirement that the inner feelings and opinions of the participants match those outwardly expressed in the ritual.

Geertz's discussion of "cultural texts" like the Balinese cockfight (1971) analogizes them to works of art and literature. However, to extend his analogy, no single example or type of literature is accessible to the whole of the society; instead

there are a variety of artistic and expressive forms, each with their own audience. Geertz notes that a single cultural text is not a master key to a culture, but only one of the multiple and contradictory texts that abound. Therefore, we should be wary of privileging one cultural performance as the key to a culture; it is just one of many. However, large-scale, official, public events like festivals arguably are more widely representative than events with more limited participation, since they are public, recurrent, and involve the participation of large numbers of people either actively or as spectators.

The Study of Student Culture

With the above caveats in mind, this study will approach capping as a cultural performance of university students. Capping, a heightened, out of the ordinary annual event, will be treated as a window on New Zealand student culture; native exegesis will be included along with my own.

The focus on cultural performance is a departure from the usual practice in the study of student culture. Particularly since the second world war, contemporary college student life has come under intense scrutiny from educators (Tylor 1963). The motive behind much of this work was to investigate the influence of student peer culture on the pedagogic aims of the institution, following Woodrow Wilson's observation, originally made in 1909, that "the real intellectual life of a body of undergraduates, if there be any, manifests itself, not in the classroom, but in what

they do and talk of and set before themselves as their favorite objects between classes and lectures" (quoted in Clark and Trow 1966:18).

When educators talk of "student culture," they usually refer to student attitudes and activities that relate to their student role. Some investigators describe a single "unofficial" culture that is shared by all or most students in an institution and that exists in opposition to the "official" culture of the faculty and university organization (Becker 1963:15; Hartshorne 1957). Folklorists who have investigated college student folklore have similarly relied on an "official-unofficial" oppositional model in their conceptions of student culture (Bronner 1990; Leary 1978; Toelken 1978:376). A more sophisticated approach recognizes the existence of a variety of student subcultures (or "role orientations") that can coexist in a single institution, and which differ in their attitude toward the student role and their purpose in being in school (Bolton and Kammeyer 1967:119-124; Clark and Trow 1966:19-26; Horowitz 1987; Trow 1963:105-106).

The methods used by most of the student culture studies rely on objective data gathering, especially questionnaire, psychological methods, and survey research interviews. These methods treat culture as objective and quantifiable, as if it were equivalent to the sum of all student opinions and a statistically derived average student week. Even those investigators who used participant-observation methods, or who emphasized the activities of students rather than their attitudes, still emphasized the quotidian and the typical (e.g. Bolton and Kammeyer 1967). In this approach, festivals and the like are excluded precisely because they are out of the ordinary.

The assumptions behind the study of cultural performance, on the other hand, argue that the extraordinary special events may reveal more, or at least a complementary view, of the culture of a group than a whole battery of tests and surveys. This study views culture as actively and self-consciously produced by the members of a group, and examines not what statistics say students are, but what students say about their identity by means of a cultural performance.

Festival as a Special Form of Reflexivity

Among the diversity of events encompassed by the concept of cultural performance, a variety of formulas exist that describe the relationship between the lived in world and its representation in the cultural performance (e.g. Handelman 1990). Commonly, ritual and festival are seen as having contrasting discourse styles and contrasting relationships to the world outside. Abrahams, for example, divides enactments into those that formalize and intensify elements of the everyday, and those that playfully invert them (1974:19-30; cf Da Matta 1977). The former style is associated with ceremonies and solemn rituals, and with state-sponsored political spectacles; they correspond to Handelman's category of events that present the lived in world (1990). The latter style is associated with play and festival, and corresponds to Handelman's category of events that re-present (1990).

For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to distinguish between discourse styles and the events in which they are used, since a single public event can combine several communicative styles on a single occasion. This is particularly true of festivals,

which, according to the definitions cited above, are complex events that encompass multiple genres and styles and component events, including rituals. To treat one communicative style, such as inversion, as the defining characteristic of festivals is to confuse the part for the whole (Da Matta 1977; Smith 1975:3-5).

Da Matta argues against categorizing events in dichotomous terms as either formal or informal, serious or ludic. For example, although Brazilian Independence Day and Carnival appear to be opposites, the former sacred, formal, and upholding social structures, and the latter profane, informal, and obliterating social distinctions, he argues that such a dichotomy takes only the most obvious features of each event as its defining characteristics, and ignores both the elements of structure in the informal Carnival, and the elements of *communitas* in the formal Independence Day. Rather than classifying events, he proposes a classification of modes of discourse. Similarly, Leach (1979 [1961]) distinguishes three modes of discourse that occur in festivals/rituals, which he calls formality (in which social rules and distinctions are intensified); masquerade (in which people adopt masks and costumes that hide social distinctions and disguise their social personalities); and role reversal (in which people play at being the opposite of what they are). According to Leach, all rituals/festivals ideally include all three styles, although he notes that role reversal is rare in the modern world. "A rite which starts with formality...is likely to end a masquerade; a rite which starts with masquerade ...is likely to end in formality" (229).

Despite the complexity of cultural performances and especially of festivals, it is the ludic style of discourse, or symbolic inversion, that has drawn the most interest,

and which is often taken as encompassing all festival behavior. In fact, sometimes no clear distinction is made between inversion that occurs during a festival proper and similar reversals, like Christmas belsnickling, that strictly speaking a part of a calendar custom. Scholarly interest is directed toward inversion as such, wherever it occurs, whether in a festival or some other public event.

This typically festive style, then, has been the object of much interest. It is conceived in a variety of ways; first as a type of antithetical behavior that departs from and contrasts with everyday behavior; more specifically its departures are those that are thought to contravene everyday rules and norms. Secondly, it is conceived as a style of communication, a "carnival semiotic" that contrasts with everyday communicative styles and with other styles available for use during enactments. One question that has exercised the minds of scholars in considering this material is, what kind of representation of society and culture does the festival provide? Another concerns the social function of festive performances; do they ultimately reinforce the established order, or do they contain serious challenges to it?

A cardinal point of thinking about festival (and in some cases ritual) has been the idea that it exists as an antithesis to the everyday world. This idea of juxtaposition originates in Durkheim's observation that human beings recognize a fundamental dichotomy between the individual and society, and between the sacred and the profane; he argued that religion, including rituals and festivals, is a means to return temporarily to the sacred realm from the profane and mundane world of everyday life, and for the individual to experience intensely the feeling of being part

of society. Leach elaborated on this idea that festival interposes a sacred interval into the profane time of daily life in his "Time and False Noses" (1979 [1961]). Pieper (1965:3-9) similarly described one of the definitive characteristics of festivity as the antithesis of the festive and the everyday. This antithesis consists in a departure from the world of work to the world of play, the latter being not simply the absence of work, but a completely different outlook. The essence of festival, argued Pieper, is activity that is meaningful in itself, which is the antithesis to the goal-oriented activity of work:

To celebrate a festival means to do something which is in no way tied to other goals, which has been removed from all 'so that' and 'in order to.' True festivity cannot be imagined as residing anywhere but in the realm of activity that is meaningful in itself (1965:7).

Other scholars have enumerated the characteristic and distinctive behavior that occurs during a festival, and which contrasts in various ways with mundane activity. Falassi summarized this variety of antithetical behavior under "four cardinal points" of reversal, intensification, trespassing, and abstinence:

At festival times, people do something they normally do not; they abstain from something they normally do; they carry to the extreme behaviors that are usually regulated by measure; they invert patterns of daily social life (Falassi 1987:3).

In terms of behavior, formal rituals and political ceremonies no less than festivals involve people in behavior that is out of the ordinary, for example singing in unison and wearing archaic robes. The point of interest is not just that people behave

differently; it is that there are different ways of behaving differently. These behavioral modes are usually categorized in terms of how they relate to everyday norms, social structures, and the like; that is, according to whether they reinforce the established social and cultural structures, or whether they challenge them. The festive style is the latter.

The particular form of alternative behavior that most interests students of festival is the kind usually referred to as "reversal" or "symbolic inversion," defined as "any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms" (Babcock 1978:14). Some have argued for a more precise use of the term reversal, restricting it to those cases where roles conceived as exclusive opposites are completely reversed. The phenomena currently labelled reversals include alternative behavior, abstentions, and the mixing of categories normally kept separate, as well as reversals proper (Needham 1983).

Whether labelled reversal, transgression, or license, the interesting point about this festive behavior is that it contravenes everyday cultural practices and norms. The question therefore arises, is reversal subversive, and if so how subversive? Is it a real challenge to the established order, or is it merely joking? Different answers have been supplied by different observers. One influential theory, popularized by Gluckman and extended by others, notably Victor Turner, argues that rebellious and extraordinary behavior on ritual occasions served a cathartic function, both for the individuals and for the social system as a whole. In a similar vein, it is suggested

that the performance of disorder and improper behavior during festivals serves as a form of social control by pointing out how inappropriate and dangerous it is to depart from the norms of acceptable behavior (Brandes 1988). In all of these cases, the potentially challenging and subversive messages of festive reversal are strictly bounded and framed as being non-serious, as having no significance beyond the temporary boundaries of the event itself.

In contrast, festive communication has also been shown to be seriously subversive, to go beyond the frames that would deny it any relevance to the world outside the festival. Thus numerous festivals have been known to erupt into violence, a possibility encouraged by the presence of crowds, alcohol, and license. Moreover, it has also been observed that real protests and revolutions often use the forms of masking and procession associated with festivals. For example, Natalie Zemon Davis argues that transvestism and the reversal of male and female roles, a common ingredient in festivity, provided alternative concepts of family structure and encouraged innovative thought and behavior. They also served as practical devices during political protests, supplying both license and disguise for protesters (1978). Similarly, during the Reformation in Germany, the tradition of Fastnacht processions provided occasions and methods to advance the new ideas of the Reformation by mocking and parodying the Pope, the clergy, and the Catholic Church. Fastnacht thus provided a familiar traditional vehicle for advancing new ideas, and contributed to the spread of the Reformation (Scribner 1978). This role of carnival in the rise of

Protestantism is ironic when one considers that Protestantism has been blamed as the main culprit in the suppression and taming of carnival in the modern period.

Not merely the content, but the very style of discourse associated with different cultural performances is thought to be either conservative or subversive. Barbara Babcock-Abrahams (1974:926-930) describes the "carnival semiotic" as communication using a surplus of signifiers, in such profusion that the meaning of everything is called into question. This style of communication, by means of repetition and surplus, demonstrates the creative potential of signs at the expense of their instrumental and representational function. This style suggests the arbitrariness of the link between signifier and signified, between words or symbols and their conventional meanings; it suggests alternative combinations and even suspends meaning altogether. In contrast, the communicative style found in serious ritual relies on a limited range of signifiers, each of which is caused to represent a variety of signifieds; the meaningfulness of signifiers, the connection between sign vehicle and content, is reinforced rather than being challenged. It has been suggested that the carnival semiotic promotes change, eludes control, and is inherently subversive, while the ritual semiotic is inherently conservative, channelling thought along familiar lines and impeding creative, alternative thought (Bloch 1989; Manning 1983:27-30).

There is no single answer to the question of whether festival is ultimately conservative or subversive. Each event must be considered in its own social and historical context. The closest one can come to a generalized answer is to say that festive reversal is ambiguous. Abner Cohen suggests that "at the best of times

carnival is uneasily poised between compliance and subversion" (1982:35), and his comments are applicable to all festivals that feature public institutionalized reversal. Cohen compares carnival to a joking relationship, which "expresses both alliance and enmity, both consensus and conflict, at one and the same time. In other words, it is an ambiguous symbolic formation that camouflages and mystifies a contradiction" (37).

The comparison to joking is a useful one, for joking is profoundly ambiguous. The framing of joking often does not announce "this is just a joke;" but instead asks, "is this a joke?" It is appropriate to compare festive reversal to humor, particularly as festivals are full of humor of all kinds, including word play, jokes, satire and parody, playful aggression in which people pelt each other with inflated bladders or with bags of flour, and practical jokes. The last of these forms is particularly noted for rendering the playful frame ambiguous. All of these forms are present in capping, which is remarkable for its prominence of practical jokes.

Relationship between Festival and Its Everyday Social Context

Various positions have been taken on how the social context of festival relates to its representation in the festival. Those who emphasize the antithesis between the festival and the everyday world suggest that everything in the festival is the opposite of, or at least profoundly different from, the everyday world. This claim is a part of the rhetoric of festival itself, namely that the festive world is a fantasy world, with no connection to reality. However, another tradition in festival scholarship points to the

similarities between the festive fantasies and the surrounding context. Representations billed as fantasy may be more accurate reflections of reality than they appear at first.

One point of disagreement in the analysis of rituals, festivals, and other cultural performances has been whether they reflect the host culture, or mask its true character. This divergent approach is exemplified in treatments of the Palio in Siena. Alan Dundes and Alessandro Falassi treat the palio as a symbolic representation of Sienese worldview (1975). Sydel Silverman (1981) takes the opposite view that the Palio, by emphasizing the organization of the city into rival *contrada*, or districts, functions to obscure from view the more important but less openly acknowledged divisions between different social classes. Silverman advances a sort of "bread and circuses" argument, namely that by focussing the attention of the population away from class rivalries, the Palio helps maintain the position of the privileged classes. The festival, in this view, is not a mirror of culture but a smoke screen.

Similarly, Mechling and Wilson (1988) argue that the annual festival at an agricultural college reinforces rather than challenges the organization's central values by avoiding potentially threatening topics. Although the festival parade uses humor, scatological jokes, and disorder, it does not mock the college leadership, and it avoids the sore topics that would point to the contradictions between the institution's practice and its value system. Specifically, the alleged cruelty to experimental animals, like dogs, that are usually classified as pets, threatens the organization's normative picture of human-animal relations; although this issue is present during everyday life at the school, it is not mentioned in the festival.

A third approach argues that festivals, as opposed to ceremonies, neither reflect nor mask culture but instead play with and challenge it and confront its inherent contradictions. Rodeos, for example, embody contradictions inherent in the American cultural distinctions between work and play. In a structural semiotic analysis of a Texas rodeo, Stoeltje (1981; 1987) shows how the sequencing of events describes a series of dialectical movements between the opposing principles of work and play, and human-dominated versus animal-dominated activities. In the beginning these principles, all of which are relevant to the local cattle culture, are kept separate, but as the rodeo progresses they become increasingly confused and inverted. The whole event is a presentation and comment upon the issues of cowboy work and play, and of human-animal relations, in the local culture.

The relationship between festival and its everyday context is more complex than the formula of reversal or even difference implies. It has been observed that in societies where social relations are normally egalitarian, festival creates temporary hierarchies, while the opposite is true for festivals in societies that are normally characterized by hierarchical social relations. Thus Mardi Gras and a number of American community festivals have their festival queens and other ways of playing the aristocrat, while Carnival in Brazil is marked by an equality not normally found in Brazilian social relations (Da Matta 1986; Stoeltje 1988:220). However the fantasy world constructed during the festival is closer to the everyday reality than its rhetoric claims. For example, Mardi Gras floats featuring "Kings" "Queens," "Dukes," and the like, appears at first sight to be citizens of a democratic, egalitarian state playing

out a total fantasy of aristocracy. However, these floats and the election of the festive aristocracy are controlled by elitist organizations, the Mardi Gras "Krewes," whose membership is drawn from the social and political elite of the town. Far from being total fantasy, then, the parade floats depict, in an exaggerated form, the social realities that obtain in New Orleans during the rest of the year, although the presence of these untoward social facts is normally not discussed openly. Festive transformation in this case means the exaggerated public display of dirty social realities that actually exist all year long but that contradict the official ideology of equality and democracy:

American Carnival places social power on parade, allowing people to see what they have always suspected, that social status is not an open system. The vision is delicious not because it turns the democratic surface upside down, but because it plays on the difference between the hidden and the revealed....Mardi Gras' elite dimension is not simply a spectacle; it is a performance of the tension between surface and deep reality created by adherence to elitist codes in a democratic polity (Kinser 1990:282).

However, the festival does not talk straight about these matters. By means of hyperbole, humor, and play, and a rhetoric of fantasy and of discontinuity from the everyday, these representations are presented in such a way that it is not necessary to take them seriously. They can be received as "just jokes," as fantasy, as having nothing to do with the real world of the everyday. Stoeltje discusses how the Queen contest in a Luling, Texas community festival is framed as playful pretense (Stoeltje and Bauman 1989:163). Festival provides a fantasy realm in which people can play at being what they are not; it "offers opportunities for the expression of concepts and

the negotiation of power not possible in everyday life nor in the rituals of established institutions" (Stoeltje 1988:220).

The fantasy frame provides a disguise for the potentially threatening or unwelcome facts that are represented within it, allowing observers and participants the opportunity for "plausible denial": that is, they can ignore the resemblance between the festive signifier and its signified, the everyday context. While the ritual or ceremonial style of communication says, in effect, "This is the way things are," the playful or joking mode commonly used during festivals says, "This is not the way things are," but does so with a broad wink that subverts its own frame, leading to the sneaking suggestion that perhaps this fantasy is supposed to be taken as an accurate representation of reality. Accordingly, the playful frame is always profoundly ambiguous, because it includes itself in its own message.

The festival-as-antithesis approach implies that the disorder and licentious behavior that commonly occurs during festivals is a departure from everyday life. However, as Abrahams and Bauman point out, even during mundane times no community is free from a certain amount of disorder; certainly drinking, dancing, illicit sex, and other deviations from the norm are not confined to the Carnival season. To define festive reversals as the inversion or transgression of commonly-held social norms is to imply that there is a single set of commonly-held social norms in a community; however, following the anthropological trend to take greater account of conflict and heterogeneity in culture, Abrahams and Bauman suggest that for some people, licentious behavior during the festival is a continuation, indeed an

intensification, of the way they behave all year round. "The same people who engage in disorder during the festivals are the community agents of disorder during the remainder of the year" (1978:195). In the cases they discuss, Carnival in Saint Vincent and belsnickling in Nova Scotia, the community agents of disorder are unmarried young men.

Participation and Community Base

This observation about who does what in festivals represents a departure from another recurring point in festival rhetoric, namely the assertion that it is participatory. Participation is thought to be both universal and active. "Festival rhetoric" refers to the claims that festivals (that is, the festival organizers and frequently the participants) make for themselves about themselves; claims which are often repeated by outside observers and theorists of festival. These claims constitute what Abner Cohen (1982:35) called a "blueprint" of festival, which presents an ideal of festival and its effects. A substantial portion of the study of festivals in recent years is devoted to analyzing this rhetoric and frequently challenges its assumptions.

The rhetoric of universal participation means that no-one is excluded from the festival. All members of a whole community are assumed to take part--or to have the right to take part--either directly or indirectly and to various degrees (Falassi 1987:2; Stoeltje 1989:163-164). Most often, festival rhetoric and festival theory claims that it fosters the abolition of social differences, promoting "fraternization" (Pieper 1965:52) between people from all walks of life and from different social classes. This

universal participation is often said to promote solidarity between the members of a community, as Durkheim proposed. Solidarity is enhanced because the festival is claimed not to belong to one organization or group alone, but to the whole community. Thus different festivals are often known by the city or town in which they take place, by whom they are produced, and to which they "belong;" thus we have Carnival in Basle; New Orleans Mardi Gras; the Calgary Stampede, the Luling Watermelon Thump, and so on. In theory, anyone who is a member of these communities can take part in the festival. "One has a right to take part simply by virtue of his being a member;" argues Robert J. Smith; "indeed, it is often a man's participation which confirms him as a member" (1975:5). This celebrating-in-common is thought to create bonds between the participants/community members:

They identify with each other; in a general participation festival the individual relates to, and identifies himself with, the community. Thus the festival is a prime device for promoting social cohesion, for integrating individuals into a society or group and maintaining them as members through shared, recurrent, positively reinforcing performance (Smith 1972a:167).

Solidarity, local identity, reunion, and the like are commonly named among the most important when festival organizers and participants explicitly state the goals of their celebration (Ossenberg 1969; Stoeltje 1988).

In contrast to the explicit universalist rhetoric of festivals themselves, close examination of festival attendance suggests that the concept of universal participation needs some modification. For example, a questionnaire was administered to the residents of Mainz concerning their participation in Fastnacht, which revealed that a

significant number of community members actively avoided taking part at all, either by staying home or by leaving town for the duration of the festival (Erz and Jungrichter 1977). Ossenberg (1969) observed the behavior of citizens in bars during the Calgary Stampede, to see who "got into the festival spirit" (that is, wearing cowboy costumes, exploiting temporary freedom in interactions with strangers and with the opposite sex, and so on). Although the organizers of the Stampede assert that the whole town gets involved, Ossenberg found that only the people in middle class bars did so. People from the other social classes did not behave out of the ordinary; indeed, people in lower class bars wanted nothing to do with the Stampede, finding it a sham. Studies of other Carnivals (in Rio, the Dominican Republic, and Spain), have similarly found that the choice of whether or not to take part varies according to social class, or that the members of the different classes celebrate in separate and distinct ways (Gilmore 1975; Gonzalez 1970; Turner 1987:89). Far from promoting "real fraternization" or "communitas," through universal and promiscuous participation, some festivals may enhance social distinctions through selective and differential participation. In part the assumption of universal participation derives from the once general tendency of social scientists to emphasize the homogeneity of society, to focus on the harmony- and solidarity-promoting functions of cultural phenomena, and to treat the communities they described as if they were undifferentiated.

Festival and Conflict

Festival rhetoric defines the festival as a privileged period of freedom from everyday restraints (e.g. Norbeck 1963:1267). Thus in his eyewitness account, Goethe described the Roman Carnival as a time when "each man is set at liberty to go fooling to the top of his bent, and that all license is permissible short of blows and stabs" (1987:15). In some accounts festive freedom is so extensive that the festival becomes a world of its own (Bausinger 1980:22-24; Cox 1969; Duvignaud 1976; Pieper 1965:3-9). Octavio Paz, for example, saw the Mexican fiesta as creating a separate world:

It is governed by its own special rules, that set it apart from other days, and it has a logic, an ethic and even an economy that are often in conflict with everyday norms....space, the scene of the fiesta, is turned into a gaily decorated world of its own....In certain fiestas the very notion of order disappears. Chaos comes back and license rules. Anything is permitted....(1961:50-51; quoted in Brandes 1988:2).

"During carnival time," says Bakhtin, "life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom" (1984:7).

These statements describe the results of festive license, but leave untouched the question of how these states or freedom are achieved. Recent approaches to festival follow the lead of anthropology in stressing the practice or performance of culture (Bauman 1986:131-133; Ortner 1984). Festivals are treated not as a fait accompli but as a process and a product of human agency, an approach that takes into account the role of social conflict in the production of public events.

This approach reveals that pure spontaneity and freedom during festivals are illusions; structure and organization are required to make spontaneity possible, and festive freedom is limited by the operation of alternative rules and standards (Abrahams 1981:318; Goessel and Schwedt 1977). Ritual reversal seems like freedom in comparison to the everyday contexts that surround it, but study of specific festivals and the ways in which these privileged occasions are organized reveals that reversal on these occasions is subject to some limits and regulation.

License is the mechanism that makes public, institutionalized reversal in action possible (Gluckman 1955:109-136). Since reversal is not only alternative behavior but often also involves transgression against everyday norms and rules, a necessary prerequisite or concomitant of reversal is the temporary suspension or alteration of the norms that govern and restrict everyday activity, so that people can act in ways that would not be tolerated at other times. Whether the salient feature of festival is called freedom or license, it is achieved through social interaction. That is, the members of a community agree to grant themselves, or grant some of their number, special permission to break the rules. Thus, Harvey Cox defines festivity as "a *socially approved* occasion for the expression of feelings that are normally repressed or neglected" (1969:22; emphasis added).

In tribal societies, during rites of reversal people are not only permitted, but sometimes *required* to be disorderly and to act in ways that are normally forbidden (Turner 1974:73-74; Wallace 1966:135-138). In these formulations, license is

assumed to be unproblematic, based upon the consent of all or most of the community.

In complex, stratified societies, however, carnival and other licentious calendar occasions license is much more problematic. The history of carnival in Europe is far from being dominated by freedom and license; on the contrary, as Brednich said, the history of Carnival is the history of its suppression (quoted in Wagner 1986:123)). The long list of prohibitions and official edicts seeking to ban or regulate aspects of festivity form one of the most important sources of documentary evidence for the early history of European carnivals. Licentiousness and reversal are problematic because they are potentially limitless; given the participation of opposed social, ethnic, and other groupings, there is no guarantee that festive licentiousness will remain within the limits set for it, or that it will easily revert back to the unchanged established order once the festival ends. History shows that festivals have in fact lead to rioting and violence.

European history shows that festivals are difficult to achieve in practice, being strongly contested events (Cohen 1982; Davis 1986:13; Manning 1983:7). Despite their often egalitarian and classless rhetoric, festivals are often arenas for the continuation of class struggle. On the one hand carnival may provide a way for underprivileged segments of society to give event to protest, or simply to assert themselves (Cohen 1982; Gilmore 1975; Weidkuhn 1976:44). At the same time, the achievement of license in carnival and other festivals often runs into middle-class opposition, based either on aesthetic objections or on fear of the threat to order posed

by licentious crowd behavior in the streets (Brereton 1975; Davis 1982; 1986; Kinser 1990; Wagner 1986).

Exoteric Performance

Another approach to festivals and public events suggests that they can be a means of promoting difference as well as solidarity. In this area folklorists have lead the way.

Most conceptions of festival, including those that recognize the existence of selective participation and active opponents, see them as fundamentally esoteric events. That is, they are produced by and for the internal membership of a group or community. In this esoteric formulation, the presence of outsiders, for example tourists, at the festivals is usually downplayed. When the presence of outsiders is noted, they are usually treated as irrelevant to the purpose of the event, and as barely noticed by the local population.

An exception is in discussions of the influence of the tourist trade on festivals. Sabina Magliocco (1988), for example, discusses how the patronal festival in a Sardinian community has been modified in order to attract and retain the tourists; but these changes are shown to have caused a decline in interest among the local population. In response, they have revived a second local festival for themselves. In this case, the same event cannot successfully serve for both touristic and internal consumption.

Recently folklorists have paid increasing attention to exoteric performances, in addition to their traditional preoccupation with esoteric or in-group lore. Exoteric folklore is made up of performances that are predicated upon differential identity instead of shared identity. These performances cross group boundaries, in that the performers specifically target outsiders as their audiences. Introducing the concept of differential identity and its role in folklore performances, Bauman (1971) suggested that street vendors' cries and the folklore that is performed by adults for children, are examples of folklore that is specifically designed to cross group boundaries. The folkloristic study of ethnicity is one area in which the concept of exoteric performance and differential identity has played an important role. The agenda in this area is currently focussed on "folklore on and about cultural boundaries," and "settings, social occasions, and events in which boundary negotiation is an important activity" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983:45). Interest in exoteric performance is not limited to ethnicity however; Abrahams points to large scale public events such as festivals as a likely site to study "the dynamics of lore as it is performed and practiced at the boundaries, even across the borders, between and among people of varying languages, classes, and cultures" (1981:306).

To date, Abrahams' programmatic essay is the only folkloristic work that talks about exoteric festivals. This study takes up his call for such an analysis. The majority of festivals in the literature to date have a local rhetoric that proclaim the events' esoteric and unifying character--however that claim works out in the practice of the festival. Capping provides a strong contrast, because it is profoundly exoteric

in both rhetoric and function, holding the attention of both an outsiders and insiders. In short, capping is a festival for and about town and gown--to use the local terms for the relevant groups that are involved. The insiders, and the most active participants in capping, are the students. However, much of capping is set in city streets and public spaces, and the non-student public is involved as audience, consumers, and targets.

The role of the outsider audience in capping is another feature that distinguishes it from most other festivals. Although they are principally passive spectators, they are also symbolic participants in the festival. Stoeltje's analysis of rodeo argues that during cultural performances, the human participants, like physical objects and other symbols, become sign vehicles (Bauman and Stoeltje 1988:590). "In festival, with its widespread performance and participation, persons embody concepts--become the signs of concepts..." (Stoeltje 1988:219). Female barrel racers in rodeo, for example, are not simply competitors, but are understood to be representations of their communities, and more symbolically still, as signs of womanhood. I will take a similar approach to the analysis of capping, with the addition that in this case not only active performers but also the relatively passive public audience operate as signs for the insider audience.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWN AND GOWN DOWN UNDER

Wellington is the capital of New Zealand and its second-largest city, with a population of 350,000 in the greater area in 1988. Topographical constraints make Wellington a compact city, most of it perched on hills that rise steeply from the harbor. The central city--much of it built on land reclaimed from the sea--is dominated by government and business offices, along with retail space. Over one third of the region's employed population--65 thousand people in 1981--work in this central business district (Fowler 1981:73-75).

Ten minutes by cable car--or a twenty-minute uphill climb--take you from the city's premier shopping street to the residential suburb of Kelburn, the site of Victoria University. The Kelburn site was chosen for the university, in preference to more distant locations that offered more room, because it was central. The college was designed with part-time students in mind, who worked in the city during the day and attended lectures after five p.m.; thus a site was needed that was close enough for them to get to and from their offices in time (Beaglehole 1949:84-85).

The campus enjoys exceptional harbor views, but is cramped, with a little over six acres for more than seven thousand students. The site is hilly and difficult to

build on, with no room for the sylvan groves associated with American colleges or the expansive lawns of Oxbridge--or even for parking space. Around it--and partially through it--moves a heavy stream of traffic from the central city to the residential suburbs, traffic that students must dodge daily.

When students referred to themselves as "we here 'on the hill'" (Graeme Lay's recent novel about Victoria student life is titled The Fools on the Hill), they spoke literally. One graduate in her eighties still remembered the 196 steps she had to climb each day from downtown to Terrace Street, and the steep climb from there to the university itself (Nita McMaster and Olga Harding W-3-3-88)¹. The arduous physical climb from the city to the campus also provides a metaphor for the social aspirations of students who "travelled hopefully up to the Kelburn heights...in the effort to arrive" (Irvine-Smith 1948:225). More disparagingly, one anonymous graduate described them as "the great dull flood that sweeps up the hill and back again with its ticket to a better job" (quoted in Beaglehole 1949:271). A former mayor of Wellington has used the university's topographical eminence over the city as a metaphor for its intellectual superiority and objectivity:

It is right...that the University, symbolic of research and objectivity, should remain clearly visible above the commercial and political centre of New Zealand, where objectivity is occasionally less than obvious (Fowler 1981:95).

¹ Interviews are cited by tape number and counter number showing the approximate position on the tape.

In some circles in New Zealand, students are known as "scarfies." This name is used occasionally by students themselves, like the student association president at Massey University who opened his weekly column in the student paper with the salutation "Yeah giddy fellow scarfies" (Chaff, April 28, 1988:3). According to an informant who is a police sergeant, "scarf-dragger" is the slightly more pejorative variant used in the police force (interview with Michael Mann W-3-17-88:440). The name comes from the long distinctive scarves in college colors that, along with college blazers and a particular kind of shapeless overcoat, formed a de facto uniform for university students until about 1963 (Lay 1988:194; Stuart Johnston W-5-13-88-1:449).

Dress is but one way to display a distinctive identity. I talked with a graduate student who argued that scarfies look different from the general population, even though they no longer wear a distinctive costume. Asked how you spot a scarfie, he replied:

You just do. Students walking down a street stick out. If you've been to university you can pick them out. Even if you haven't, you can pick them out. Something about the bags under their eyes, the disheveled look. Poverty-stricken hunger (laughs). You can't pick out what makes them identifiable, but students are I think quite readily identifiable. (Interview W-5-4-88:035)

Twenty-five years after college scarves had gone out of fashion, this student still felt that students were somehow identifiable, although he could not say exactly how. His feeling reflects an esoteric conviction that students are distinctive, rather than any objective characteristics. The former costume was the outward sign of this strong

consciousness of kind that New Zealand students felt and still feel to some extent. In contrast, Michael Moffatt reports that Rutgers students in the 1980s felt that no-one would be able to guess they were students simply by looking at them (Moffatt 1989:51). Students in New Zealand, however, feel much more visible as a group.

The feeling of visibility carries with it a feeling of vulnerability. Student journalism frequently repeats the belief that the public is watching them, along with the conviction that the public has a negative, stereotyped and misinformed image of them:

New Zealand university students are regarded by the community with an unholy mixture of pride and contempt, confidence and mistrust, envy and scorn. Wild generalisations are made about them on the basis of ignorance, faulty assumptions and a pathetic but natural desire to have people labelled with a set of comfortable adjectives....Any rational discussion of students, and their place in the community, is made extraordinarily difficult because of the accretion of prejudice, misinformation and snobbery about the word student. (Salient, 30 (6), June 2, 1967:6)

Despite its central location and proximity to downtown Wellington, there has been a perennial complaint among Victoria students that the university, far from being "clearly visible," has a low profile in the city at large. "Situated as the College is on the heights of Kelburne," commented one editor of the student journal Spike, "it is far removed from the business thoroughfares of Wellington, and indeed is, comparatively speaking, little known" (Spike, 25, June 1914:8).

In this respect, Victoria is usually thought to be worse off than other campuses in the country; indeed it has been called "the Cinderella of the Colleges" by its

students. "It would be hard to find another city than Wellington," observed one student writer, "where the University is regarded with the same fixture [sic] of indifference and distrust" (Spike, June 1931:17). At other times, students characterized the attitude of the town not as indifference, but as negative scrutiny: "The slightest action of the smallest group of students is observed and criticised, and most usually condemned," said one student, describing "the normal antipathy of this town to its University--an attitude surely unique among university towns" (Salient, July 2, 1941, p.2). Whether they felt they were being ignored or unfairly criticized, students at Victoria believed in a "tradition of mutual resentment" between Wellington and its university (N.T. Clare, "Town and Gown," Spike, 65 1937:5).

This sentiment remained almost an article of faith for students, former students, and faculty in 1988. The reason most often offered for the better town-gown relations allegedly enjoyed by some other New Zealand universities--Waikato, Massey, and Otago--is that they are located in small towns rather than in a city. In Wellington the importance of government and commerce overshadow the presence of a university, while the small university towns are described as virtually dependent on the presence of universities. As Victoria's Registrar, Dr. Harvey said of the relationship between Otago University and Dunedin, "If the university moved out of Dunedin, Dunedin would just about have to pack up" (W 3-31-88:275). The other universities enjoy much closer relations with their communities, including a better public attitude toward university students than is the case in Wellington. "The relationship between Victoria and the city was never as strong," said former student

and Cappicade editor Gyles Beckford. "Wellington is not a university city.

Palmerston North and the rest very much recognize the university. [In Wellington]

There wasn't the degree of affection towards university students, or their antics, or understanding, as there was in the other cities" (W-5-2-88:120). In a small

university town like Palmerston North, home of Massey University,

half the people in it derive their living either directly or indirectly from the university. There the whole community is likely to get behind a graduation event. Not just students. If the students go on a bit of a drunken rampage it will be tolerated; it will be criticized, justifiably, by people, but they'll accept it a little more tolerantly than here. (Nigel Mander, W-2-15-88:390)

However, although it is true that for Wellington the university is neither the only game in town, nor even an economically vital constituent, there is more than population size and economics at the root of this persistent image of the town's indifference or hostility to its university. Students and professors in those favored university towns probably felt like Cinderellas as well, for the idea that relations are usually bad between universities and their home communities is an old and widely-held one. Under the entry for "Town and Gown" in his dictionary of university slang, Morris Marples asserted that "bad blood between the townspeople and the members of the university....seems to be an inevitable byproduct of the university system" (1950:178).

The phrase town and gown has a violent and colorful history. It is most often found in discussions of "town-gown rows," namely rioting between townspeople and members of a university. In the Middle Ages these rows were full scale battles in

which buildings were burnt and people were mutilated and killed. Medieval riots involved the most senior members of the town and the university, not just the youth and the students. They represent struggles between opposing corporations over important rights and privileges, at a time when direct violent action was the usual approach to resolving disputes (Pantin 1972:68-69; Rait 1971; Rashdall 1936: v.3:79-113; 427-435; Reeve 1976). In the case of Oxford and Cambridge, the town-gown struggle resulted in the university's power and privilege being increased at the expense of the town. Rashdall describes the history of town-gown battles at Oxford as a process "by which a society of teachers succeeded first in sharing, then in almost monopolizing, the government of an important English town" (1936: v.3:79).

In modern times the reasons for conflict between town and gown still exist, although the means of settling disputes is now more likely to be in the boardroom than in the streets. The first cause is economic and structural; it lies in the fact that universities typically have extraordinary freedom from property taxes and other normal controls of the city administration, while at the same time using municipal services and occupying large tracts of prime real estate in the community. University and city administrators must work together despite inherent differences in style of operation that make conflict likely (Milne and Moulton 1977; Ross 1973).

A second cause of town-gown antipathy lies in the nature of the student body, which represents an influx of temporary residents with no ties to the town, as well as forming a concentration of young people from a privileged class. Antagonism between working-class youth and their more privileged coevals could lead to rioting,

as in the 1842 Oxford cap "war" at Harvard (Porter 1971). Oxford town-gown rows in the Victorian period differed from their medieval antecedents; while the early riots arose in the power struggle between the university and the town, the later disturbances were between gentlemanly students and working class townies (Pantin 1972:68).

A third cause of town-gown differences lies in the conflict between the academic enterprise itself and the alleged anti-intellectualism of society at large. Most often, intellectuals have put the blame for poor relations between the New Zealand public and its universities squarely at the feet of the former. Thus John Beaglehole, when he was editor of the student magazine Spike, wrote:

There is, anyhow, something grotesque in the idea that University thought has ever met with any general encouragement in New Zealand, much less in the capital city, and certainly least of all in the last few years. You might live in Wellington for ten years without discovering that it is a University town; and then only find it out from a column of silly accusations and twaddle in the paper by a Minister of the Crown or one of the numerous 'leagues' with which the country is cursed (Spike, June 1923: 8).

Other New Zealand intellectuals have complained similarly about the "strain of anti-intellectualism in the New Zealand character, an undervaluing of brains in comparison with brawn, a suspicion of people whose interests--and sometimes their opinions also--are not shared with the common man" (Morrell 1969:240-241).

The anti-intellectualism of the national character has been a perennial theme of social criticism in New Zealand, "Where men but talk of gold and sheep / And think of sheep and gold" (William Pember Reeves, A Colonist in His Garden). Some

explained that this anti-intellectualism was the product of its colonial and frontier roots, where practicality was valued, because the colony was settled by people who were only interested in making money. According to nineteenth-century visitor Samuel Butler, "A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it....If it is good for sheep, it is beautiful, magnificent, and all the rest of it; if not, it is not worth looking at" (1863; quoted in McLeod 1968:vi). Since the colonial period, according to commentators, anti-intellectualism has been enshrined as part of the national fetish for egalitarianism (McLauchlan 1977:122-150; cf Morrell 1969:240-241 above; Phillips 1987:282-84).

A search of national literature, political speeches, and letters to the editor unearths no shortage of evidence to support the claim that New Zealanders are scornful or distrustful of intellectuals and academics, but there is another side to this picture, namely, the intellectual's scorn for the layman. New Zealand's "small intellectual community, vigorously hostile to its bland, smug environment,...is largely alienated from the wider community whose tastes it ineffectually strives to elevate" (McLeod 1968:4). This picture of the alienation of intellectuals is of course not unique to New Zealand. It can be argued that its root lies in the academic enterprise itself. The German university doctrine of Lehrfreiheit and academic freedom, widely adopted by academics during this century, envisions the university "as a republic of scholars pursuing learning free from any external restraint or influence" (Milne and Moulton 1977:4104; Rudolph 1968:409-416). Such an attitude widens the gulf between professors and lay people. Intellectuals in New Zealand share this vision of

the academic mission. As stated by John Beaglehole, "It is the duty of the university to pursue truth and uphold academic freedom--albeit responsibly--to question, 'to transcend its time and its environment'" (1949:283-284). In other words university thought should be critical, unorthodox, and iconoclastic. The corollary of this is that the non-academic world is unlikely to understand or tolerate university thought (1949:282). It is unrealistic to expect that "the surrounding society transcend itself and submit patiently to this analysis and criticism" (1949:284).

Students sometimes followed the lead of their teachers and embraced the belief that they had a right, indeed an obligation, to be rebellious and unorthodox, even though the world outside did not share their "ideals of academic freedom and progressiveness" (Spike, 1937:5-7). Thus another student editorial argued that student rebellion fulfilled a vital role, namely "to invigorate a society so that it does not stagnate in its own complacency." The function of a university was to equip students with the ability to play this role of social critic:

To analyse prejudices, scoff at false idols, and even to reject the most consoling belief where it conflicts with truth, are part of the process of education.

If students cease to be provocative then, it means either of two things; that God's Own Country hides no prejudices or false idols, or that students are failing in their most vital function ("Sense of Beautiful and Good Essential," Salient, June 2 1967, p.6).

Widespread public acceptance is incompatible with this definition of the academic mission. Given this definition of their task, academics sometimes expect that they and their institutions will come in for some public criticism. Their attitude

is ambivalent; at the same time they deplore public intolerance and opposition, they welcome it as a sign of intellectual objectivity and independent thought. It proves they are not populists. At a baser level, it proves that "we" are different from "them." At its worst, loyalty to the idea of academic autonomy is simply a form of exclusiveness.

There are, then, a number of reasons to support the statement that New Zealand universities, and Victoria University in particular, were not unique if they suffered from poor town-gown relations. Whether students and academics were correct in thinking that they were worse off than their sister institutions either in small university towns or in other countries, I cannot say. I know of no study that attempts to objectively measure the attitude of the Wellington public toward their university.

The important point is that this "Cinderella complex" has been and continues to be a recurring theme in the discourse of Victoria's students. It occurs in student journalism, and it arose frequently in both formal interviews and informal conversations that I had with students and former students. Furthermore, I believe that the town-gown dichotomy plays a greater role in student self-image at Victoria than is the case for university students in other countries. To understand why this should be so, it will help to know the social and organizational context in which New Zealand university students find themselves, and which provides the sociological basis that underlies the construction of student identity.

Victoria University is one of seven universities in New Zealand, and the fourth one to be founded. Although each of these is an independent degree-granting

institution, with its own governing body (called a University Council), there is very little to distinguish between them. All belong to a public university system which retains a high degree of central control.

Until 1961, New Zealand's universities formed the constituent parts of the University of New Zealand, a federal university modelled on the structure of the University of London. The constituent colleges taught, while the University examined students and granted degrees. This system was begun in 1870, when the first universities were being established in New Zealand, in order to control the rivalries between competing provinces so as to provide higher education for the whole population, and in order to maintain academic standards. The latter goal was met by having academics in England set and mark the exams for New Zealand students, and the practice of using overseas examiners was still in place for some degrees in the 1950s.

This federal system was not popular with the professors, who campaigned for years to win more autonomy in designing their courses and for the right to examine their own students. By 1959 this had been achieved in practice, and in 1961 the University of New Zealand was formally dissolved to be replaced with seven independent universities (Beaglehole 1949:131-154; Beaglehole 1937).

Although the University of New Zealand is no more, it has left a legacy of a centrally controlled university system. Today, 80 per cent of university funding comes in the form of quinquennial block grants from the government. The remainder comes from student tuition, gifts, and endowments (Dakin 1973:108). The block

grants are not itemized, leaving each university council free to determine its own budget. The advantage of this system is that the basic income the universities need is virtually guaranteed (the amount of the block grants is decided upon taking into account the budget requests submitted by the university councils). New Zealand universities do not have to recruit students or solicit support from alumni or foundation sources. They are insulated from the demands and influence of powerful special interests, of local communities, or of students in the role of consumers. A recent official review of the university system has recommended that universities seek financial support from non-government sources more vigorously, and enhance their communications with alumni and with the public sector (1987:xxviii; "the universities must give much greater attention to reaching out and informing the public of their activities and role within society" 135).

One drawback of this reliance on government funding is some loss of autonomy. This has an effect on the university's relations with local government, because the university cannot go beyond national government policy. "Because we are not exactly a branch of government, the city council sometimes thinks that we should be more responsive to them than the other government agencies are. But we are virtually totally government funded, so we cannot go beyond government policy in responding to these concerns for the neighborhood" (Assistant Vice-Chancellor Stuart Johnston, W-5-13-88-1:039).

In return for the government block grants, university councils have an obligation to expand classes when student numbers require it. Course offerings and

proposals for degree courses are subject to the scrutiny of the University Grants Committee, which limits the autonomy of the universities but also reduces the duplication of courses nationwide. There is a high degree of rationalization in the university system, with the various professional schools divided amongst the separate universities. Victoria, for example, offers architecture, public administration, and social science degrees; those wishing to study engineering must go to Auckland, while medicine is taught at Otago (OECD 1983:63-64).

The individual universities do not set their own admission standards. These are set nationally by the Universities Entrance Board, which comprises representatives from government, universities, and secondary schools. This body prescribes the standards of the national examinations that determine who matriculates. Anyone who qualifies for university entrance under this national system has a right to enroll at any university in the country. There are no prestige universities in New Zealand; your choice of university depends mostly on where you live and on which degree course you choose. It is not uncommon for students to transfer from one university to another (McLaren 1974:141).

New Zealand has retained a centralized, almost wholly government-funded university system in order to ensure equality of educational opportunity, and avoid any sign of a class-based system of education. The prevailing ideology that governs the provision of education in New Zealand was stated memorably in 1939 by Peter Fraser, then Minister of Education, in a statement that is repeated like a credo to this day in discussions of New Zealand education, namely, that "every person, whatever

his level of academic ability, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers" (OECD 1983:13).

Following this credo, New Zealand practices a system of free, compulsory education for all until the age of fifteen; thereafter education is free up to and including the tertiary level for those who are deemed to be academically qualified. For those who meet the national university entrance standards, the government pays tuition fees and provides living allowances. This system is designed to ensure that "the test which applies for entrance to university is not financial but achievement at secondary school. In a country where equality of opportunity for self-improvement still counts for much, the right to a university education is conferred by qualifying for University Entrance" (NZ Yearbook 1978:191).

The other side of this open entry system is a highly competitive and selective secondary school system. The full secondary school course lasts five years, but the majority of students do not complete the full course; only 24% did so in 1979 (Cowen & McLean 1984:287). At the end of the third, fourth, and fifth years, students take one of a series of nationally-organized exams that determine their eligibility to enter the next level of schooling. The School Certificate exam, controlled by the Department of Education, is attempted in the third year, which for most people is the year they reach the minimum school-leaving age of fifteen. In many ways a pass in this exam represents the basic school leaving qualification. However, almost half of the school leavers in a given year (42% in 1970) did not have even this qualification, either because they had not passed or because they had not attempted it. The number

of people leaving school in a given year who have obtained School Certificate is usually around 25%.

The remaining one quarter of the school leavers have completed a fourth or fifth year of secondary school, and have attempted the University Entrance Exam in the fourth year, and sometimes the University Bursaries and Scholarships exams in the fifth year. These higher exams are controlled by the Universities Entrance Board; success in University Entrance qualifies a student to matriculate at any university in New Zealand, including entitlement to grants for tuition fees and bursaries for living expenses. Candidates in the fifth-year exams compete for additional grants.

At all levels, the national exams taken by secondary school students act as selection devices to filter out a predetermined percentage of the candidates. Instead of establishing a standard of pass that remains the same every year, the examiners use a norm-referenced system in which candidates are ranked and only a predetermined percentage pass. The pass rate is generally close to the fiftieth percentile, so half of the candidates taking any exam will fail (Cowen & McLean 1984:287). Since exam passes determine who may enter the next level of secondary schooling, the result is an almost perfect pyramid structure in the national secondary school population. Progressively fewer students are enrolled in each of the third, fourth, and fifth years of study. The same structure is apparent in the distribution of qualifications of school leavers. The majority have no formal qualification; the next largest group has School Certificate only, and there are progressively fewer with University Entrance, Bursary and Scholarship exam passes.

Secondary schools in New Zealand began as preparatory schools for the universities, and despite several changes they have retained an academic and elitist orientation, reflected in low pass rates and an emphasis on traditional academic subjects (Cowen & McLean 1984:279; Ritchie and Ritchie 1978:63-74). Until the mid 1970s, secondary school pupils were sorted according to aptitude into academic, general, and vocational streams (Johnston 1976:125). Since educational attainment is linked to success in the national exams, whose content is established nationally, the exams have exerted enormous influence on the curricula and operation of secondary schools. Critics have charged that the system puts undue emphasis on narrowly academic subjects and does not do well by students who are not academically inclined. Today, the examination structure has been reformed to make school leaving qualifications more widely distributed, but the basic structure described above is still in existence.

Although New Zealand boasts open entry to university education, in fact a relatively small proportion of the 18- to 21-year old age group is enrolled in higher education. Despite the post-war increase in the number of university-bound school leavers, the percentage of university students in the population today is low by international standards;--only nine percent of the 18- to 21-year old age group (Dakin 1973: 107; Universities Review Committee 1987:xiv; xvii; McLaren 1974:139ff; OECD 1983:22-23).

Another way to get an idea of the relative size of the university student population is to look at the number of school leavers who state their intention to

continue to full-time university study (source: New Zealand Yearbooks). In 1951, only 3.5 % of school leavers had this goal in mind (5% of the boys and 2% of the girls). Although not everyone would actually carry out their intention, and the student population includes some people who would not have named university as their destination when they were leaving school, this figure supplies a rough idea of the size of the university student population relative to the rest of the population, and it is further evidence of the stratification mechanisms operating in secondary schools.

The figures measuring the intended destinations of school leavers indicate that there have been significant changes in the size and gender composition of the university student population since the second world war. The overall percentage of school leavers intending to go to university increased from 3.5% in 1951, to 12% in 1984. Boys outnumbered girls in the university-bound group by more than two to one in 1951 (5% of male and 2% of female school leavers listed full-time university study as their objective). By 1984 the number of girls almost matched that of boys (11% and 13%, respectively).

Since 1911, the Government's policy has been to provide free university education for the most able students, by paying all or most of their tuition fees as well as modest living allowances. The level of support was greatly increased in the late 1950s and early 1960s, so that now the majority of students receive free university education as well as some kind of living allowance (Oram 1969; Wright 1969a:2; 8 #11). Equal tertiary studies grants are made to all students who qualify academically, regardless of their level of personal income or that of their parents. Suggestions that

the level of student aid be tied to family income through means testing are dismissed out of hand as promoting unequal treatment.

In New Zealand the state, rather than individuals or their families, is responsible for providing financial support for students. In 1962 the Minister of Education boasted that the inclusiveness of the government's support for students entirely precluded any need for financial aid from their families:

Today any young man going through University, if he has average ability, is prepared to work, and will do a little seasonal work in his long vacation, can complete his degree without paying one penny piece or costing his parents a penny (Wright 1969a:3).

A survey conducted by the New Zealand University Students' Association in 1969 confirmed that the majority of students relied on a combination of government bursaries and scholarships, plus earnings from vacation jobs (Wright 1969a:11 #25; 1969B; 1970). Only eight percent of students reported that they would be relying primarily on financial aid from their families (Wright 1969a:11 #25). The relatively small role played by family financial support represents a major difference between the higher education systems in New Zealand and the United States; while most American middle-class families feel obliged to support their children at college, in New Zealand that role is filled largely by the government (Ausubel 1965:47-50)².

The New Zealand education system combines competitive secondary school examinations, which rigorously select the most academically able students for

² However, many New Zealand families offer partial support to their children by giving them free or heavily subsidized board at home while they attend university.

university entrance, with provision of virtually free university education to those who are academically qualified. The system is meant to ensure that the student population is selected not on the basis of class or income, but on the basis of academic merit. The goal is an intellectual meritocracy; not an aristocracy of class or wealth, but, to quote one graduation ceremony speech, "an aristocracy of brains."

The structure of the system reflects a conviction that the social benefits of higher education are more significant than the private ones. Recently, a commission into New Zealand higher education recommended that despite the rising costs, the government should continue to meet the bulk of the real cost of education to university students, for "the contribution made to the nation's development and economic competitiveness by a highly educated workforce...substantially outweighs the private benefits from higher education" (Universities Review Committee 1987:xxiv).

The secondary school system and its tier of competitive exams select the academically able students and channel them toward university. Some of the students whom the system delivers to the university gates in this way may lack strong personal motivation to achieve a higher education, and are driven instead by a more passive wish to please parents, teachers, and the system. They are at university because society thinks they belong there, as much as because they themselves want to be there. This lack of strong personal motivation may explain the very high rate of failure among first-year undergraduates in New Zealand (Parkyn 1959-67; Sinclair 1983:200-201).

This highly socialized education system, and the social philosophy behind it, are reflected in the self-image of students. There is a sense in which society has chosen them for this student role, as much as they have chosen this path for themselves. Individual motivations for personal gain, and individual finances, are matched in importance by a socialized selection and support system that emphasizes social benefits. In such an environment students tend to see themselves in collective terms. Their collective identity is as strong as their individual identities.

It is generally agreed that the esoteric construction of group identity by the members of a group includes not only consciousness of kind--the conviction of a group's members that they share something in common--but also consciousness of difference. Any feeling of identity inevitably implies a corresponding sense of difference (Bierstedt 1970:284; Burke 1969:22; Oring 1986:24-25). Thus part of the symbolic activity of any group is the expression of ideas concerning what makes it distinctive, and what the group boundaries are (Cohen 1974:69-70). "As there can be no self or concept of self without other, there can be no sense of group without some other group" (Dundes 1983:239). The other group is generally depicted in terms that are the symbolic opposite of what insiders think of as their own characteristics; the other becomes a benchmark against which insiders can define themselves.

The "other group" exists as a symbol as much as in fact; in the construction of group identity, it is the image of the other group, as much as the reality, that becomes most significant. Wm. Hugh Jansen's formulation of the esoteric factor in group identity included not only what a group's members think of themselves, but also what

they suppose others think of them (Jansen 1965:46). Referring to ethnic groups, Edward Spicer has argued that opposition is the essential prerequisite for the formation of a persistent identity system (in Royce 1982:43-50). By "opposition" he meant literal conflict in the history of ethnic groups that persistently resist the larger society's attempts to assimilate them. However, opposition can be symbolic as well as real. In the symbolic construction and expression of group identity, another group must be found to fill the slot of structural opposite. The condition of being the structural, symbolic opposite is most clearly expressed by an outside group that is in opposition in the sense of being an antagonist. If such an antagonist does not exist in fact, then one must be invented.

Thus a group will suppose that what other groups--or rather, the significant other group--thinks of it must be pejorative, and unjustly so. This esoteric belief implies the existence of an antagonistic outsider, creating symbolically the opposition that is necessary for the development of group identity, collective consciousness and internal solidarity.

In addition to simply expressing these esoteric beliefs about "them," groups also enact them in public events of various kinds. The process of finding some other group to fill the role of antagonist is common to all groups. What differs is the choice of other. For students at different times and places, that role has fallen to the college faculty or administration. At other times student populations have divided themselves up into sub-groups that periodically enact oppositional relationships. In

New Zealand, the significant opposition is that between students and non-students, or town and gown.

The reasons for this include the high degree of homogeneity in the universities and in student life nationwide. Another important factor is that students comprise a relatively small segment in the population at large. A study carried out in 1967 found that of a random sample of 300 people in a small town, 77 percent had no direct contact with a university student. Only half of a similar sample of city dwellers had direct contact with a student. The study found that in fact, people with little or no contact with students were much more likely to have a negative, stereotyped image of them (Hamid 1973). These conditions promote the operation of an esoteric-exoteric factor in the expressive culture of students (Jansen 1965).

Because all New Zealand's universities are centrally funded and to some extent centrally controlled, there is little difference between them in either endowment or educational philosophy. Moreover, student life varies little from one campus to the next, since it is dependent on government funding that is distributed equally to all students. Although their personal income or their parents' income varies, studies suggest that students from middle class backgrounds and those from working class backgrounds have the same level of income while they are students (Wright 1970:21).

Most students in New Zealand live with their parents, since their student bursaries are not intended to cover full living expenses. Additional boarding allowances are available only to students who must attend a university at a distance from home either to take a specialized course or because they live in an outlying

district. Accordingly, many students live in their parents' home and commute to classes (40% in 1969). Nationwide only 19% of students live in residence halls on campus. Most of the rest live in private board (15%) or in apartments shared, usually, with other students (24%) (Dakin 1973:108-110; Johnston 1976:128-131; Wright 1969a:6; 7#4). The pattern of residence was essentially unchanged in 1983. Residence choices for students at Victoria University were similar to the national trends, with the difference that even more students lived in their parents' home and fewer lived on campus (NZ Yearbook 1984:239).

Another salient characteristic of university education in New Zealand is the high proportion of part-time students. 46% were enrolled on a part-time basis in 1959. Concern over this state of affairs was one motivation behind the expansion of the student bursary allowances in 1962. This measure helped lower the proportion of part-time students to 25% of the total student population, but in the 1980s it had returned almost to the former level because bursary levels could not match the impact of the ailing economy. This figure is high by world standards; in Great Britain the corresponding figure is 3% (Dakin 1973:39-40; McLaren 1974:142-143; OECD 1983:65). The corollary of this fact is that many students do not complete their degrees in the minimum time (three years for a bachelor's degree).

Because there are relatively few differences in the social and organizational characteristics of New Zealand universities, there is also little emphasis on inter-campus differences in student expressive culture. There are, for example, few New

Zealand equivalents to the "Aggie" jokes and similar popular slurs that American college students and alumni tell about rival colleges (Beezley 1981; Costner 1975).

The relatively high degree of cohesiveness within the student body is also visible in the way that campus social groups are organized. At Victoria, all students automatically become members of the Students' Association upon enrollment. Instead of charging separate fees, all student clubs are affiliated with the Association and receive grants from its general fund; in return, every student has a right of membership in any and every club (Beaglehole 1949:202). Such an arrangement encourages cohesiveness among the student body as a whole. According to John Beaglehole, visitors to Victoria from universities overseas were struck by the strong corporate life of the students (1949:273).

In emphasizing the relative homogeneity and internal cohesion of New Zealand students I do not mean that they do not recognize differences amongst themselves as well. Stereotypes circulate that allegedly describe members of the different schools, and majors, such as Commerce and Arts; some groups, for example law students, have the reputation of being great drinkers; the committed students who devote themselves to student politics are contrasted with "the beer-swilling, rugby-playing crowd," and so on. The few residence halls that exist have created traditions of mutual raiding and other esoteric customs including ways of initiating freshmen in various physically humiliating ways. However, these internal distinctions seem weaker than the much more tightly organized rivalries that exist between American college fraternities, or between the secret societies and Burschenschaften of the

German universities. Apart from the initiation rituals of some residence halls, which touch only the small percentage of students that live in them, there is nothing in New Zealand student life to match the American system of organization into classes and the structured oppositions enacted between seniors and juniors (Sheldon 1901:10-36; 97-105; Walden 1989).

Another distinctive feature of student life in New Zealand is its independence from control by professors or administration. Management of student extracurricular life is left almost entirely to the students themselves. The Association also has disciplinary powers over its members. The preamble to the university's disciplinary regulations states that "it has been assumed that there should be a minimum of rules governing social interaction within the University community " (1988:91).

The low profile taken by New Zealand professors in the management of student life is part of their heritage from British universities, which have remained small and have not developed the extensive administrative arm found in North American institutions. Thus there are relatively few regulations because there are fewer people charged with the duty of administering them. Secondly, New Zealand, like the Scottish universities, departed from the model of the residential college, in which the professor or the college stands in loco parentis and virtually all aspects of the student's life are subject to regulation. This system developed in the late medieval universities, reached its most extensive and disciplinary form in sixteenth-century German universities, and continues in the college system of Oxford and

Cambridge, whence it was adopted as a model by American colleges (Aries 1962:241-268; Ashby 1970; Rudolph 1968:86-109).

Such extensive systems of external control sometimes led to outright rebellions of students against professors (Rudolph 1968:97-98; Ware 1975). In another form of reaction there arose student societies and cultures such as the German student secret societies (Sheldon 1901:10-36), and in North America the student literary societies and then the fraternity system (Horowitz 1987; McLachlan 1974; Moffatt 1985; Rudolph 1968:136-155). In these cases, the symbolic opposition between students and professors or college administration was a significant defining characteristic influencing the forms of student extracurricular life, expressive culture, and group identity. In contrast, antipathy between students and faculty has been notably absent at Victoria (Beaglehole 1949:262). Since the academic staff (to use the term most often used in New Zealand universities) have such a low profile in student life outside the classroom and lecture hall, they are relatively insignificant in symbolic construction of student identity and group consciousness.

For all these reasons, in the construction of student identity in New Zealand the important distinctions are not those between different groups or types of students, or those between students and professors, but instead the distinction between all students and non-students--the student versus of town and gown. Their strong consciousness of kind is expressed in the conviction that the university experience is, or should be, much more than a matter of study, lectures, and examination results. Rather than being merely a routine occupation that takes up so many hours in a week,

being a student is a total experience, something that touches on all aspects of the individual's life. In a column in a student journal, the Student Association President at Massey University urged students to get involved in the full range of student life:

What that requires is an awareness of more than "results", "passes" and internally assessed ability--it means getting down to the Fitz [a local bar], cycling over the bridge, losing it on a hostel bed, writing philosophical articles for Chaff, boogieing down to Radio Massey, wearing sheets--whatever makes "us" different from "them" ("A Politically Sound Guide to Student Politics," Chaff, 55 (5), March 30, 1988:5).

This call echoes countless others made by student journalists and leaders throughout the history of higher education in New Zealand. Prominent in this account of student life is the consciousness of difference between students and their symbolic opposites. This esoteric and reflexive set of beliefs, in which students expressed what they thought outsiders thought about them, was also enacted in the annual public event called capping. To this event we will now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAPPING CEREMONIES:

"TOSSING A CHANCELLOR ON A SEA OF WIT"

Graduation ceremonies are the highlight of the academic year, and the occasion when the university puts itself on display to the community that houses it. They have significance for the individual, namely for the graduates who are receiving degrees and their families; and also for the organization, the university as a whole. For individuals the graduation ceremony is a rite of passage, and for the organization it is a cultural performance.

1988 Ceremony

I shall start with a description of Victoria University's graduation ceremony that I attended in April 1988 (see figure 1 for a copy of the order of the ceremony). The ritual was held in the new city auditorium, situated in the heart of Wellington. The auditorium was the largest in Wellington, built in the 1980s to replace the old Town Hall, which had been the usual site for Victoria's graduation ceremonies in the past. There is no auditorium on the campus itself capable of holding everyone that attends graduation; even in Wellington's largest hall, the number of people participating in the ceremony is such that seating is limited. Originally these ceremonies were open to the public at large, but as the number of

graduands grew it became necessary to restrict entry. Today entry is strictly by admission ticket, four of which are issued to each graduand for his or her guests. Other invitations are issued to the faculty, to senior staff members, to honorary degree holders and to a few other dignitaries.

Various devices ensure that the secular space of the auditorium is transformed into "sacred" ritual space. (I mean sacred in the sense of being distinguished from everyday, mundane space; it does not have any religious overtones in this context. In fact Victoria's graduation ceremonies have always been markedly free from any overtly religious elements.) In the lobby of the hall, guests were greeted by the exotic sounds of the university's gamelan orchestra, playing traditional Indonesian music and music by New Zealand composers. Inside the hall itself, the university orchestra, clad in academic gowns, played Mozart. Both orchestras did more than merely entertain the audience as they waited for the proceedings to begin; the music marked a temporal and spatial discontinuity with the mundane world outside of the ritual (Leach 1986).

The ceremony proper began with the academic procession of the university faculty into the hall. As they processed the orchestra played the Processional Fanfare, written by a former Professor of Music at the university and based on the tune of Gaudeamus Igitur. In their academic gowns and hoods and in order of seniority, the faculty walked solemnly to their appointed places in serried rows upon the stage. The procession made an impressive display of color and constituted a display of the official university hierarchy, from the University Council to the Deans of the Faculties, the academic staff, senior non-academic

staff, and the President of the Students' Association. Lastly came the most important members of the official party, who sat in the front row of seats directly facing the audience. These VIPs included the officials who would perform the rituals in the ceremony, namely the Chancellor of the University, the Registrar, the Vice-Chancellor, and the invited guest who was to deliver the graduation address. The rest of the party was made up of dignitaries from the Government, additional university officials, and five holders of honorary degrees from Victoria. This group included ex-Chancellors of the university and a former Director-General of Education.

After the official party was seated, it was the turn of the graduands to take their places in the hall, which they did to the accompaniment of a modified Maori ritual. Two Maori women took the stage and began a high-pitched, emotional call of welcome (*karanga*) in Maori, using a call-and-response pattern. Following this a party of young men and women entered the stage and performed a series of Maori action chants (songs accompanied by dance - *haka powhiri*) to welcome the graduands as they processed slowly into the hall. The hakas ended when all the graduands were seated.

The incorporation of the *haka* and *karanga* represent a syncretic blend of European ritual and a Maori ceremonial gathering, or *hui*. As *hui* begin with the local Maori welcoming groups of visitors onto their marae, so the graduands were welcomed into the town hall - the ritual space in which the ceremony was to take place (Salmond 1974; 1975). The rituals had been modified by the Professor of Maori Studies to suit the new context. At a *hui*, a woman from the visitor's party would have answered the hosts' *karanga*; but the

people filling the visitors' role in this context, the graduands, had neither the ability nor the right to do this, since few of them knew Maori and none of them would have been old enough (Salmond 1974). Accordingly this role was filled by a second woman on the stage.

As a segue from the Maori to the European portion of the proceedings, the audience was asked to stand to sing the national anthem, first in English and then in Maori. Judging from the way they mumbled their way through it, the Maori verse was new to most people.

The Chancellor welcomed everyone to the ceremony, calling it "a celebration of success and an occasion for congratulations to those who tonight receive their degrees and diplomas." He introduced the guests in the front row of seats on the stage; described some recent innovations that had been made to the format of the ceremony, especially the element of Maori ritual already described; and he paid tribute to the Professor of Maori Studies. He addressed the graduands directly, expressing the hope that their university education had stimulated fresh attitudes to society and to the values they held in life. Finally, he introduced the guest speaker, Mary O'Regan, who was a graduate of the university and the first head of the government's Department of Women's Affairs.

Where the Chancellor had spoken as a representative of the University, explaining and at the same time defending the rationale behind the rituals in the ceremony, Ms. O'Regan spoke as a critic of the university. She began her speech with a ceremonial greeting (*mihi*) in Maori, directed to all those present, including the dead and especially the women dead. Her speech dealt with the advances of women in attaining university education, but was also critical that women and minorities still had not achieved equal

participation in the university, a failing that was the worse because "universities are inherently linked to the power structure, and are able to influence the direction of society, and the development of its values and priorities."

The last part of her speech was directed to the graduands, whom she congratulated, saying, "This is very definitely one of your life's most glorious moments--so far. Tonight we are all celebrating your years of hard work and your achievements at the end of it. You and your families and friends must quite rightly feel very proud." She called on the women graduates especially to remember the women students who had gone before them and made their achievements possible. Some of the women there that night, she said, might become High Court judges. Her closing words were both a benediction and an adjuration: "I wish you the very best of luck with the rest of your lives. I hope you all find jobs, if that's what you want, and I hope that you will always work in the interests of others, as well as your own."

This speech was followed by the conferral of an honorary Doctor of Science degree. The Vice Chancellor read the citation for the degree, which enumerated the highlights of the candidate's career, his honors and distinctions, and praised his achievements in fulsome terms. It concluded with words that formally presented the candidate to the Chancellor "for the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causae*, in this university." The Chancellor pronounced the formula that conferred the degree, the hood was placed over his shoulders, and he received a leather-bound copy of the citation.

The recipient, Dr. Prior, made a speech of thanks in which he also offered the

graduands his congratulations and some advice. He urged them to develop the potential of their minds, and reminded them that "you have to accept responsibilities, not only for yourself, and not only as a New Zealand citizen, but also as a global citizen."

The candidates for the degrees were asked to stand, and the Chancellor pronounced the formula that admitted them to their degrees. The Registrar read aloud the names of all of the graduates, upon which they ascended one by one to the stage, shook hands with the dean of their faculty and with the Chancellor, and received their degree certificates as they left the stage again. Two photographers on each side of the stage took each graduate's picture as they were congratulated. After the conferral of the degrees everyone was asked to stand while a *tohunga* (Maori ritual specialist) performed a prayer (*karaka whakapumau*) to confirm the degrees. The ceremony closed with the singing of Gaudeamus Igitur in Latin, and again most people had to mumble the words. The audience remained standing as the graduates and the academic party processed out of the hall. Finally there was a supper for graduates, officials, and guests.

The order of the 1988 capping ceremony is essentially the same that has been used at Victoria since its inception. The main differences that have been introduced between 1902 and the present were meant to accommodate the growing number of graduands who were presented for degrees each year. For example, during the early ceremonies the Chancellor pronounced the formula of admission to a degree over each individual candidate; but since 1923 the formula has been pronounced over groups of candidates, who then mount the platform one by one to receive their diplomas.

Other elements of the ceremony besides the conferring of degrees have also remained essentially the same. These elements include an academic procession of the graduands (and sometimes of the faculty); a number of speeches, usually three; and the formal singing by everyone present of a number of significant songs. There were two of these in 1988, the national anthem and 'Gaudeamus Igitur'; prior to 1987 the 'Song of Victoria College' was also a regular part of the program. Other formal and serious College songs, composed by students up until the First World War, were gradually dropped from the programs as the amount of time available for them decreased and as knowledge of and enthusiasm for them declined.

The most innovative changes to Victoria's capping ceremony were made in 1987, when the Maori rituals described above were incorporated. The University Council decided to make the change after consulting with graduates and faculty on ways to improve the ceremony, and asked the Professor of Maori Studies to design and implement the new rituals. The feeling amongst university members that a New Zealand ceremony should contain something from Maori culture as well as European culture reflects a strong movement in the country since the 1970s to remove Maori culture from its marginal status as entertainment or object for tourists. Where once the goal was to assimilate Maori culture, today both Maori and Pakeha intellectuals have embraced the goal of making New Zealand a truly bicultural society (Hanson 1989:894-897; MacDonald 1985).

The Maori portions of Victoria's capping ceremony are the only elements that make it significantly different from graduation ceremonies elsewhere in the world. Since both the

medieval European universities and later ones established in countries colonized by Europe modelled their ceremonial on those of their antecedent institutions, there is little variety in university ceremony. The formula for conferring degrees at the first commencement ceremonies held at Yale included the words "pro more academiarum in Anglia" ("in the manner of the academies in England"), and the ceremony was modelled on that used at Cambridge (Hall 1851: 55-69; Thwing 1915:141-142). The term 'capping ceremony,' used in New Zealand and Scottish universities, is itself a continuation of the medieval *inceptio*, in which the new master received, as the insignia of his new status, an open book, a gold ring, and the master's square cap placed on his head (Rashdall 1936 vol. 1:224-231; 284-287). Scottish universities as late as the nineteenth century still conferred degrees by touching the head of the graduand with a cap kept for this purpose (Grant 1941 vol. 2:32; Hutton 1904:91; Rashdall 1936 vol. 1:231). Although Victoria University and other New Zealand universities adopted this peculiarly Scottish usage of "to cap," there is no direct evidence that actual caps were ever used; diplomas were presented instead.

On the basis that Victoria's capping ceremonies have remained essentially the same from 1902 to the present, the analysis that follows will draw on illustrations from throughout that time frame. However, since the most detailed sources available to me were the annual reports published in the student magazine Spike from 1902 until 1938, this early period will be more heavily represented.

Capping As Rite of Passage

The explicit purpose of the graduation ceremony is to move the graduands through the three steps of a rite of passage (Van Gennep 1960). They are separated from the secular world, hidden in the basement of the hall, where they put on their gowns. Since the gowns are identical, they effectively mask any signs of the initiates' individual identity and any markers of their former status. However, since only members of the University--graduates and academic staff--may wear the academic dress of the University, this gowning also represents the first time the initiates can display the outward sign of the new status they are about to attain.

During the ceremony the graduands' position is not only symbolically but also physically "betwixt and between" two domains (Turner 1967). Their literal physical position in the hall is a direct icon of their symbolic position. On one side of them is the secular domain, represented by the audience or "lay congregation" (Leach 1986) that is there to witness the rite. In front of them is the embodiment of the university, namely the members of the university's faculty and administration arrayed in their academic finery. Directly in front of them are the ritual adepts - the university officials and the guest speakers, who are the only active participants in the ceremony.

The structure of the ceremony, down to the arrangement of the principals and the arrangement of space for the ritual, bears a close resemblance to the one outlined by Edmund Leach for both a Royal investiture in England and a headhunting ritual in Borneo (1986). The area at the front of the stage corresponds to the ritual space, in which the ritual proper

takes place, while the tiered seats at the back of stage correspond to the shrine--the abode of the deity or power in whose name the ritual is held. The ritual specialists occupying the space in front of the shrine mediate between this seat of power and both the lay congregation and the people for whom the ritual is being held. In a church the shrine is dedicated to God; in a Royal investiture it takes the form of an empty throne, which represents not the individual monarch but the power of the Monarchy in general. In Victoria's graduation ceremony, the gowned anonymous figures in the shrine area indexed not only the university, but also academe in general.

When they were called to the stage, the graduands approached this source of power, whereupon they returned, transformed, to the secular, community domain. This brief ritual is, moreover, an icon for the whole student experience. For a brief period in their lives, students come into contact with academe--mediated by those ritual specialists, the academic faculty. Eventually the students return to the outside world having been changed and improved by this experience.

During the liminal stage of their rite of passage, the graduands are subject to the authority of the ritual specialists (the marshals, the registrar, and the chancellor). Their role in the proceedings is completely passive. Patiently they listen to teachings from the elders (speeches by the invited guests from the stage). The anonymity, uniform dress, submission to authority and to lessons are all common attributes of people in the liminal phase of a rite of passage (Turner 1977: 102-103; 169-171). One report of the capping ceremony, written for the student magazine Spike in 1935, is unique for giving the graduate's eye view of the

ritual, and also illustrating the attributes of liminality in this ritual:

This, then, was the night. Undergraduate--graduand--soon all that would be all over....Prelude of gowns and hoods (how do they hang?)--climbing of stairs--and then a devious passage through innumerable bouquets and chatterings to the appointed stand, there to be marshalled in inverse order--faculties reversed--alphabet deranged (what is this scheme?) At last, in all its majesty, the procession moves. Is this the Hour? Almost the thrill of a triumphal march returning from afar to blazon Rome....The formula! Hear it pronounced, not trippingly on the tongue, but like some doom of the Cumaean Sibyl. Up steps, find hand to shake, turn right, get bit of cardboard as you pass--and all is done.

("Capping, 1935: We Endure," Spike, no. 63 (1935):43)

This account describes the dependent state of the graduate, led around by ritual specialists in unfamiliar and awkward costume and in an unfamiliar setting.

The final conferral of the degrees is a rite of reincorporation. As they are called individually to the stage the graduands regain their individual identities and make brief contact with the ritual specialists and representatives of power. They return changed by this experience and established in new, improved social status; they are no longer graduands but are now graduates.

There is a consistent incongruity in the graduands' experience of the ceremony, between the theme of achievement--"a celebration of success," as the Chancellor called it--and a contrary theme reminding them that they are not finishing but only beginning, and still have a long way to go. As Mary O'Regan said to the graduates in her speech at the 1988 ceremony, "This is very definitely one of your life's most glorious moments--so far." In other words, this initiation, like others, is not meant to convey the idea that the initiates have

no more learning or growing to do (La Fontaine 1986).

In all of Victoria's capping ceremonies, both the award of honorary degrees and the selection of invited guests reinforce this message that the graduands are only beginning their lives. Both invited guests and honorary degree recipients are older than the graduands, and have achieved more, done more, and attained higher distinctions. Honorary degrees are awarded to people at or near the close of their careers, and they are specifically awarded in recognition of outstanding achievements over a lifetime. The success of the graduands pales in comparison to the litany of achievements and distinctions that is read out in the citation for an honorary degree. The invited guests and speakers, on the other hand, represent the ruling classes of New Zealand. Over the years the platform parties at Victoria's ceremonies have included Governors-General, Cabinet Ministers, bishops, generals, and diplomats.

In line with their status as elders, many guest speakers take the time not only to congratulate the graduates, but also to offer them advice on how to live their lives in future. In 1949 the Governor-General, addressing Auckland University graduates, urged them to "get fit and stay fit," and avoid alcohol and tobacco. Ian Prior, the recipient of an honorary doctorate in the 1988 ceremony, advised the graduates to develop the potential of their minds as a matter of continuing growth beyond the university years, and to accept responsibilities for themselves, as New Zealand citizens, and as global citizens.

A second incongruity in the ceremonies, as least as far as the graduands were concerned, lies between their expectation of individual recognition, and their actual treatment as a depersonalized collectivity. A distinctive feature of Victoria's graduation ceremonies is

their retention of the feature of calling every graduate to the stage one by one, thus giving each one a measure of individual recognition. In order to accommodate this individual treatment despite the steadily increasing numbers of graduates (there were about 900 in 1988), a second ceremony was added to the capping week program in 1967 (Salient April 15, 1966), and in 1988 there was talk of adding a third. Nevertheless, time constraints mean that the amount of individual recognition is severely limited. Thus the audience is invited in the program to applaud not as each individual name is read, but only after each group has been presented (1975 program:9; 1988 program:1). In the 1988 ceremony, individual audience members broke this injunction with brief outbursts of applause and cheers as their graduate was presented.

However, it is not merely the practical exigencies of fitting 450 names into a single program that is responsible for the relative lack of individual recognition that is accorded the graduates. Even when Victoria's ceremonies handled much smaller numbers of people, there were complaints that "collecting one's hard-earned diploma is like being herded through a sheep dip" (letter to the editor, Salient, April 16, 1964:2). Much earlier, in 1916, a student commentator found the amount of time devoted to the recognition of the graduates to be entirely perfunctory:

This being the most important business of the evening, no time or idle ceremony were wasted upon it. Indeed the presentation was over so quickly that very many did not realize that it had even begun. In fact so small a figure was cut...by this part of the evening's programme, that we feel that an apology is expected of us for referring to it at all. (Spike, no. 30, October 1916:71).

At the root of these complaints is a fundamental incompatibility between the doctrine of individualism and the inherent nature of ritual and of a rite of passage. In rites of passage cross-culturally, people in the liminal stages are systematically stripped of all signs of individual distinctiveness, including gender distinctions. This stripping is a logical requirement before the neophytes can be transferred to their new status: "it is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew" (Turner 1977:95). "The neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group....they have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society" (1977:103). It is precisely this anti-individualist treatment in the graduation ceremony that the student complaints were referring to.

It is impossible to say how many graduands were disappointed with the impersonal nature of their graduation. While some may have felt this keenly, others no doubt have felt themselves to be the center of attention, and in a way they would be right.

The University on Display

Another characteristic of rituals of initiation that goes against the individualist grain is the fact that they are meant for the benefit of the already initiated, not just for the novices. "If the whole process is seen as the expression of fundamental social values, then the novices are merely one category of the structured ensemble, not the focus of the rites, nor the recipients of any message the rites might be deemed to convey " (La Fontaine 1986:125-

126). Thus it should come as no surprise to find that the actual presentation of the graduates has "no time or idle ceremony" wasted upon it, compared to the time taken up by the songs and the speeches.

If the graduands were merely one category in the rite, the other category displayed by the capping ceremony is the university itself, which thus puts itself on display both for its own members and for the community at large. Before the crush of numbers lead to the introduction of tickets, entrance to the ceremonies in the city's Town Hall was open to all and sundry. As with other public display events, the university graduation ceremonies were reported upon in the city newspapers. University members were openly acknowledged that the ceremony was a way for the university to put itself on show for the community, and thus was as a way of bringing town and gown together:

Situated as the College is in the heights at Kelburne, it is far removed from the business thoroughfares of Wellington, and indeed is, comparatively speaking, little known....Unfortunately, we do not often come into direct contact with the public; nor does the public get an opportunity of seeing what the College is doing. In the Capping Ceremony, however, we have an opportunity of meeting the people, and letting them see, to some extent, what the College has been doing in the past year. ("Editorial," Spike, June 1914:8-9)

In addition to this dimension of exoteric display, capping ceremonies are also meant for the members of the university itself. In fact there are several esoteric elements in the academic tradition paraded forth on these occasions that would be fully understood only by academics, that is, by those who have already been initiated.

Both the insiders--the members of the university--and the outsiders, namely the

relatives, friends, and other interested citizens who attended Victoria's capping ceremonies, were treated to a display of expressive forms--dress, ritual, oratory, and song--that conveyed messages about the identity and mission of the university. These messages have remained remarkably consistent from the first ceremony until the present.

The archaic academic dress worn in these ceremonies not only distinguishes the ritual realm from the everyday, it also unmistakably proclaims the university's link to the medieval European institutions to which it traces its origins. Commencement programs sometimes include notes on the medieval origin of gowns, caps, and hoods, and historians of academic dress usually explain it as originating in medieval clerical garb (Franklin 1977). However the historian of medieval universities, Henry Rashdall, argues that this link to the Middle Ages is spurious: today's academic costumes "do more perhaps to impress the imagination with a sense of the medieval origin of university institutions than is perhaps warranted by their real antiquity" (1936 vol 3:385). There was no official costume for the members of medieval universities; only later were regulations established that created a uniform and obligatory dress for masters and students (Hargreaves-Mawdsley 1963:4-10; Porter 1969:265-70; Rashdall 1936 vol. 3:385-393).

Few audience members would be expected to know the details of these debates between costume historians; even among academics this knowledge is probably confined to a few specialists. However, the meaning of this costume in the context of a capping ceremony is clear to all. Firstly the caps, hoods and gowns are perceived to be a direct link with the past--however spurious this claim may be in the light of historical fact--, thus conferring the

respectability of antiquity on the institution. Secondly, the cap and gown are distinctive to academics; only members of the university are entitled to wear them. The cap and gown are indexes for "university," as in the phrase "Town and Gown" (Marples 1950:178-179), or in the title of a book on colonial universities, Colonial Cap and Gown (Gardener 1979). Until the 1960s, secondary school teachers in New Zealand wore academic gowns, without the ceremonial hoods or caps, over their everyday clothes while at work (McMaster and Harding W 3-3-88).

The use of Latin as a ritual language--found in Victoria's 1988 ceremony in the song Gaudeamus Igitur--also signifies the university's roots in the past. This Latin song, frequently associated with university rituals around the world, celebrates the joys of youth, wishes long life and health to the professors and the university, and urges all to "rejoice while we are young, for soon the grave shall have us" (see figure 2). Although Gaudeamus is usually thought to be a medieval students' drinking song, the earliest occurrence of the song and melody in their present form are in eighteenth-century student song books (Randolph 1911-12:296-303).

Latin is doubly archaic in the 1980s; not only is it non-existent in everyday life, it has also long since disappeared as the language of scholarship and instruction. Like academic dress it persists on ceremonial occasions as a carefully preserved fossil. Both customs are invented traditions, meaning not that they are fabrications, but that they have been artificially preserved long after their original functions ceased to operate. Like invented traditions in general, they establish the organization's continuity with a historic past, which is a way of

legitimizing the organization (Hobsbawm 1983:1-2).

In the case of a New Zealand university, the need for invented traditions is especially strong, since the local institution is relatively young. As early as 1903 Victoria's graduation was described as "the time-honored ceremony" (Spike, October 1903:30), even though the College itself was barely four years old. The writer was thinking not of Victoria's past, but of a purported past of countless such ceremonies at universities in Britain and Europe, extending into a dim medieval past. The early issues of Victoria's first student magazine, Spike, contained articles that explicitly compared the College to university life in medieval universities (October 1903:8-12); and to Scottish universities (Easter 1924:48-51); and showed the origin of university degrees and customs in the old European universities (October 1906:9-14).

The tradition with which Victoria University sought to link itself is located not only in the past but also on the other side of the globe. The Song of Victoria College, composed in 1902 by the first professor of classics, Rankine-Brown, expresses the college's orientation not toward the New Zealand community in which it finds itself, but toward the Old World:

*Aedem colimus Minervae,
Acti desiderio
Artes nosse liberales
Hoc in Hemispherio.
Aedem colimus Musarum
Sub Australi sidere:
Nos a Musis maria longa
Nequeunt dividere.*

[We cherish the shrine of Wisdom
urged by longing

to know the liberal arts
 in this hemisphere.
We cherish the shrine of the Muses
 under a southern star
Us from the Muses
 extensive seas cannot separate.]

(Translation provided in the graduation ceremony program, 1975:26)

These words express almost the feelings of an exile. The university member's shrine was located not in Wellington, but across "extensive seas" in another hemisphere.

The College song, along with the elements of invented tradition from the European university heritage featured in the ceremony, do more than provide the university with a history. They also proclaim the ideology of the university, which can be summed up in the phrase that the College is, to paraphrase Andrew Lang, in the community of Wellington, New Zealand, but not of it (Lang 1970 [1885]:11). The university is a place apart, removed from the mundane concerns and day-to-day pressures of the outside world, where academics are free to pursue truth objectively. The university's motto, *Sapientia magis auro desideranda* (Wisdom is more desirable than gold), proclaims that its values are not those of the surrounding world. Sometimes Victoria's location on hills overlooking Wellington's central business district was used as a sign for its ideological distance and superiority.

In contrast to the archaic and European academic trappings that highlighted the university's distance from the local community, other elements in the graduation ceremony signified its ties to a specific secular society--New Zealand. Chief among these secular elements are the singing of the national anthem, the content of the speeches, and--in recent

years--the elements of Maori ceremonial. To most of the audience at the 1988 ceremony, Maori language and culture was only slightly less unfamiliar than Latin language and academic culture. Most people hummed the Maori verse of the national anthem, just as they did the Gaudeamus. Nevertheless, the symbolic import of this portion of the ceremony would be clear. First, it was recognizable as something distinctive to New Zealand. Thus the University demonstrated its allegiance to New Zealand specifically, as opposed to the universalist academic tradition. The university also displayed by example its commitment to multiculturalism in New Zealand, which as I have said is a widespread ideal among intellectuals in the country today (Hanson 1989:894-897).

This theme of belonging to and being the intellectual leader of the local society was also expressed in the graduation speeches. Although speeches are one of the most variable or "open" parts of secular ritual, in contrast to the fixed form or "closed" elements such as the songs and ritual formulas (Myerhoff 1977:201-202), the topics that Victoria's graduation speakers selected tended to favor three themes. We have already discussed the first of these topics, namely the congratulation of the graduates and advice for their future lives. A second type of speech was usually delivered by a university official, and concerned the year's achievements and plans of the university.

The third recurring theme treated in graduation addresses was the relationship of the university to New Zealand society and civic life. More often than not, these speeches described the value of higher education, both to the graduates as individuals, and also to society. Graduates were reminded of their duty to be "teachers of the community" (1913)

and leaders of their people (1916). They were reminded that they had responsibilities not only to themselves, but also as New Zealand citizens and as global citizens (1988). Speakers emphasized the value of the social contributions made by university graduates, in rebuilding society after the war (1916), in scientific progress (1919), and in providing the country with an aristocracy of brains (1922). The university itself had the ability to "influence the direction of society, and the development of its values and priorities" (1988).

The oratorical image of the university's relation to society was quite consistent. While the academic ideology suggested an institution that was "in, but not of" the local society, the speakers modified this message. The university and its graduates, they proclaimed, had a useful, indeed vital, function in society, albeit a specialized function and one that placed them in positions of social, political, or intellectual leadership. This concept of the university's role in society was reinforced by its invitation to community leaders and elders to take the star roles in the ritual, and by awarding honorary degrees to individuals from these groups.

These official high-minded sentiments glossed over numerous inconsistencies and contradictory messages. Critics of New Zealand's higher education system, for example, have found that far from producing well-educated and well-rounded graduates, the system is excessively narrow, conformist, and over-specialized (McLauchlan 1977:140). Moreover, by no means do all university graduates achieve positions of leadership or even usefulness in society. Cynics provided an alternative translation of the University motto, "*sapientia magis auro desideranda*," which reads, "wisdom is to be desired for the sake of more gold"

(Irvine-Smith 1943:146). Contradictions existed even within the ceremony itself. One student reporter sardonically summarized the speech of the Chairman of the Council, who, "after reaching the top flights of eloquence on 'Universities as instruments of Culture,' descended to the sordid depths of 'Universities as instruments for the extortion of Government Funds'" (Spike, 4, October 1903:30).

For the most part, the capping ceremonies were successful in glossing over these inherent ironies, in accordance with the nature of rituals to discourage inquiry and doubt and foster affirmation (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:17-19). For some graduates and students however, their experiences of graduation were neither evocative nor convincing. Some found that true depth of feeling was impossible within such a formalized, ritualistic framework. A 1935 graduate likened the ceremony to a mechanical operation, on "that freezing night in our great creaking barn of a Town Hall, when the diploma-mill creaked once again to spew forth another 150 bewildered new bachelors and masters and diplomats" (Spike, no. 63 (1935):43).

The College songs in particular failed to inspire the student participants who were obliged to sing them, and according to contemporary accounts their singing lacked enthusiasm. Said the Spike reporter in 1922, "with marked reluctance they consented to hum the tune of one or two College songs" (Spike, 42, Sept. 1922:12), while "the ceremony closed with the customary mutilation of College songs," in 1930 (Spike, June 1930:49). The songs in Latin were found to be especially irrelevant. An editorial in Salient doubted "the value of singing once a year, in Latin, only vaguely understood by most of us, 'The Song of

Victoria College,' to the tune of the Austrian National Anthem;" and suggested that a new song be found that was less "learnedly remote" (Salient, June 1, 1938:2). Tradition prevailed however, and the Song of Victoria College remained on the program until 1987. Gordon Tait, who graduated in 1973, found this experience uninspiring:

I went to my capping ceremony. What a pathetic outfit that was, too.
Nobody knew the university song. Nice tune, but nobody gave us the words!
It was in Latin anyhow. (W-3-16-88 062)

On the other hand, one student reported with surprise that the college song "really did seem to mean something to us" when it was sung at the close of the ceremony (Salient, 1:9 June 1, 1938:1).

These accounts of dissatisfaction with capping ceremonies should not be overrated. At least some of these comments stem from the typical undergraduate desire to seem worldly-wise, expressed in a constant posture of cynicism (Moffatt 1989:90-95). Another source is the laconic and unemotional style preferred by New Zealand males.

For some participants, rituals concentrate participants' attention on a small segment of experience, producing a heightened experience and sometimes an unselfconscious "flow" experience (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:8). In order to succeed, rituals must be convincing; however for a ritual to be successful it is not necessary for all participants to be equally convinced or equally moved. All that is required is that the majority of participants at least give the appearance of paying attention (Myerhoff 1977:222-223). For at least some of those present, the capping ceremonies were an emotionally charged experience: Margaret Stewart remembered "seeing everybody done up in the mortar boards and the gowns and the hoods

on; seeing their parents and their families. It was quite felt" (W 4-12-88-2 173). The editor of the student paper Salient reported that he found the capping ceremony "unexpectedly engrossing....I found it an extraordinary indulgence in the privilege of being a university student, in the best--most idealistic--sense" (Editorial, Salient, 47:9, May 21, 1984:2).

'A Strong Injection of Foolery'

Thus far there is very little in Victoria University's graduation ceremonies to distinguish them from similar ceremonies held at any other college. The roles of ritual specialists, initiands, and audience have remained much the same from the earliest ceremonies at Victoria until the present. Until the early 1950s however, a fourth group, the undergraduates, were also present. Their presence caused a substantial difference in the proceedings, for rather than sitting quietly amongst the audience, the undergraduates--or a significant number of them--played an active if unofficial role in the ritual, injecting elements of noise, humor, and disorder that could not be ignored.

An important part of the undergraduates' activities was to disrupt the speeches with interjections. These interjections were often spontaneous, in that they replied directly to specific statements made by the speakers, and the best interjections show student wit and quick thinking at its strongest. "Professor Easterfield began his speech with the words 'I will confine myself' and had to correct a student who suggested 'to the truth'" (Spike, 6, October 1904:47). Several graduates remembered examples of some of the interjections hurled at specific speakers:

I was telling Cat about an aunt of mine who was capped in Wellington, Victoria, and she was one of the early law students. Very shy sort of person. And Mr. Parr¹ held her hand rather long, so the students gave him what-o [laughter]. "Come on Parr; we'll tell Ma!" [laughter] And she didn't know where to look. This was in 1921. (Marie Head, Cecily Hammond Group Meeting, W 3-30-88 100²)

1926 I graduated. I remember going to Auckland Town Hall for our ceremony. The girl graduates were all presented with bouquets by the senior students, who had put them together. At that time, Sir James Parr was Minister of Education. He stood up on the platform and he stood like this [demonstrates; one arm on hip]. And the students all chanted, "Every picture tells a story!" [laughter] He kept putting his hands in his pockets; - "Will you take your hands out of your pockets!" And he went brightly on. (Kathleen Brooker; Cecily Hammond Group meeting, W 3-30-88 1)

Interjections reversed the normal statuses of the undergraduates and the speakers, who as I have said represented not only educational leaders but also the leaders and elders of society at large. Instead of the professor or elder disciplining the young, the young here are telling their elders off.

Interjections appear to be spontaneous and isolated outbursts of little significance. More than one commentator has agreed with Victoria University historian John Beaglehole that it is simply the result of boredom in young people forced to sit still and listen to long speeches:

¹ Sir James Parr, Minister of Education 1920-1926.

² This quote is from a group interview recorded at a meeting of the Cecily Hammond Group, a subsection of the New Zealand Federation of University Women. Those present were all graduates of the various colleges of the University of New Zealand, and most were students in the 1920s and 1930s. Because of the number of people present it was not always possible to identify individual speakers; therefore I will designate many of these quotes with the name of the group as a whole.

A strong belief existed among students that this function, as a matter of university tradition, should have a strong injection of foolery: it should be as witty and as noisy as possible, and if not witty, at least noisy....accordingly speakers were heckled and rattles were swung, and periodically the chorus was raised, "How long, O Lord, how long?" (Beaglehole 1949:126; cf Morrell 1969:76-77).

However, I would argue that student interjecting and other disruptions of capping ceremonies were more deliberate and structured than mere outbursts of schoolboy restlessness. Interjecting during debating club matches, political speeches, and Parliamentary debates is a traditional art form in New Zealand (and in Britain, where it can be observed during debates in the House of Commons). The performance of interjectors is evaluated in terms of its wit and appropriate placement in the course of a speech, while speakers are judged in terms of their ability to maintain the thread of their discourse despite the interruption or, even better, to respond in kind in a way that silences the interjector. Thus the interjectors at capping ceremonies were indulging in a recognized performance form.

The tradition of disrupting university ceremonies was widespread, and not only in New Zealand. Heckling and other disturbances had become familiar features at the capping ceremonies at the older New Zealand colleges before Victoria was founded--at Canterbury from 1884 (Gardner et al. 1973:162-163); at Otago from 1885 (Morrell 1969:76-77); and at Auckland from 1889 (Sinclair 1983:34; 184). Commencements at the University of Queensland were similarly disrupted, as were fall convocation ceremonies at the University of Toronto, while Yale students enlivened commencements and chapel services using the same techniques in the eighteenth century (Thomis 1985:149-50; Walden 1989: 102; Ware

1975:47; 55).

Undergraduate activity also took more elaborate forms than simple interjections, and these disruptions also followed traditional lines. Students of the different colleges kept abreast of what their colleagues in other parts of the country were up to, and sometimes imitated them. For example, the Victoria College magazine Spike in 1903 printed an account of the Auckland ceremony for that year, in which students had provided a "band" made up of mouth organ, tin whistle, and speaking trumpet, which "accompanied" the speeches (Spike, no. 4:49). The following year Victoria's ceremony was graced with the presence of a similar body: "Music was supplied by a bicycle bell, a horn, and a whistle, hereinafter called 'the orchestra,'" said the student reporter; and "the speeches received careful and loving attention at the hands of the students and the efforts of the orchestra" (Spike, no. 6, October 1904:47).

The same techniques were used year after year:

Do you remember when they took all the newspapers, and at one stage everybody opened a newspaper like this, all in the front of the hall. A whole crowd; it was absolutely fantastic. There seemed to be hundreds of them, all over the Town Hall, and they opened them wide, like this, and of course the whole show was shut out. Then they'd close them up noisily and rustle them and do all sorts of things with them. Just about anything was on (Craig Mackenzie, W 2-15-88 100).

This technique was part of the standard repertoire of undergraduate contributions to capping ceremonies. The Evening Post reported that at one point during the 1922 graduation address, the students "produced en masse newspapers which they rustled loudly" (Evening Post, July 1, 1922; reprinted in the Victoria University Graduate, 1982, tp verso). Alumnus

Jim Robb remembered his mother telling him about a Canterbury University ceremony that she attended, at which the students all had newspapers. Every time the speaker turned a page of his notes, they turned a page of their newspapers (W 3-11-88 B001).

In addition to interjecting and drowning out the speakers, undergraduates in the audience introduced even more incongruous elements to the formal ritual. Jim Robb attended the capping ceremony at Victoria when he was still a first-year student in 1940 and remembered "that somebody let a duck loose. One year somebody had a dead fowl on the end of a fishing line hanging over the upstairs railing" (W 3-11-88 B0001). At Auckland, in 1940, students fired peas and sago at the faculty on the stage, and released a duck which landed beside the speaker. "The duck began opening and shutting its bill as though addressing the audience too, while Rutherford's voice was heard. Rutherford tore up his notes and angrily flung himself back in his seat" (Sinclair 1983:184). Victoria students, for their part, held a flour-bomb war in 1935, which some graduates still remember (Sinclair 1983:184; Hammond group). Margaret Stuart gave me a photograph that she had from her father, showing the culprits, white with flour, in the Town Hall later in the evening after they had been obliged to sweep up.

These activities cannot have been spur of the moment productions, if only because some forethought must have been involved to ensure that the newspapers, dead chickens, and other instruments had been brought along.

Some of the heckling and disturbances were very carefully planned. The men's social

club at Victoria, the Haeremai Club³, produced what is in effect a script for their activities during the 1918 ceremony (see figure 3). The manuscript begins with instructions for the club to assemble in a cloakroom, followed by an entry into the hall singing the club song. It went on to give specific instructions for "concerted interjections" to be made during the speeches:

At call 'Rocket' - imitating a rocket.
" " 'Sheep and Dog' (only after the shepherd has had his way)
" " 'Sneeze'
" " 'Along long beer'
" " 'Sky rocket' - using the words.
" " 'One two three and then a yawn

Some interjections were prepared for use only if certain people were present:

If Sir Robert Stout⁴ is present and rises to speak sing Mr. Boose. Concerted interjection - "Quote Latin for us" "its so easy." If the Governor-General⁵ is present, concerted interjection "Hullo me Lud." Sing -
Dear little Liverpool we love you
We love you because your face it is so jammy.

In addition to disrupting the serious ceremony, the students also parodied it.

Professor Tim Beaglehole, a member of a distinguished academic family in New Zealand,

³ "Haeremai" is Maori for 'welcome;' a salient part of the activities of this club and others like it at other university colleges was the performance of action chants, or *hakas*, in Maori.

⁴ Chancellor of the University of New Zealand.

⁵ Lord Liverpool.

recalls:

One of the last things ever to break out of the formality of capping was when I was a flower girl in 1953. At that stage all of the women graduands had a flower girl who would present them with a bouquet on the stage after they had received their degree. And if it was somebody's daughter it all added to the wonderful sentimentality of the occasion; everybody thought that was terrific.

The President, Maurice O'Brien, was getting capped, and I was a junior member of Exec.⁶ So with a couple of other friends we decided that he should have a flower girl and that I should be it, and I borrowed a fantastic deb frock, and got generally done up. Couldn't obviously go and sit with the flower girls at the bottom, so when he got capped I emerged from the player's entrance at the side of the stage and went across and curtsied, and kissed him on both cheeks, and gave him this enormous bouquet of improbable things.

Most people thought it was a hell of a joke; but Sir David Smith, who was Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, was shocked. And he said, was heard to say, "Never thought a Beaglehole would do a thing like that."
(Tim Beaglehole, W 5-4-88 170)

The "improbable things" in the bouquet were most likely vegetables. Vegetable bouquets are mentioned in Spike's 1935 capping report. These mock bouquets parodied the feminine posies that flower girls had been presenting to the women graduates since about 1925. In one form of inversion, flowers are replaced by their symbolic opposites, namely vegetables, which are, as Professor Beaglehole said, "improbable" or incongruous in this context. Secondly, the flowergirls are imitated by young men dressed as exaggerated women ("a fantastic deb frock").

The bouquet parodies had two targets. One was the luckless graduate himself, who is often described as being embarrassed. Thus one graduate recalled how her husband received the same treatment when he was capped:

⁶ O'Brien was President, and Beaglehole on the Executive, of the Victoria University College Students' Association.

Some of his buddies got together, and made a beautiful bouquet of cauliflowers and carrots, and all the greens. An enormous bouquet. And joined the procession that was going up to get their diplomas, and landed this on him, much to the amusement of the crowd. But he had to cope with that. (Cecily Hammond Group meeting, W 3-30-88)

The humiliation of the graduate recalls the ritual humiliation undergone by novices in other rites of status elevation, as described by Victor Turner (1977:169-171). However, the other target of the mock "flowergirls" was the ritual itself. With their bouquets of cabbages and cauliflowers they deflated the serious tone of the official ceremony.

The mock bouquets and other visually-oriented stunts were the last vestiges of student activity in the capping ceremonies. Collective student interjections gradually died out in the 1950s at Victoria as well as the other colleges. Indeed, the mass interjections may have disappeared during the Second World War. Most faculty and others who have attended numerous ceremonies agree that ceremonies became more sedate after the war. By the early 1950s there are no more reports of interjections of either the individual or mass concerted variety; instead one or two people performed such occasional stunts as presenting vegetable bouquets, or riding a bicycle through the hall--stunts relied on sight rather than sound. After 1955 however, even these had disappeared.

Keith Sinclair argues that this disappearance was due to a change in student attitudes, not the disapproval of university staff or officials (1983:184-185). In the case of Victoria's ceremonies undergraduate disturbances died away as the increasing numbers of graduands and their guests meant that there was less and less room in the hall for undergraduates. This coincidence suggests that student attitudes may have changed after the fact.

Another reason for the decline of interjections was the introduction of public address systems, which by increasing the volume of the speakers meant that student interjections could no longer compete:

The thing that made capping ceremonies in those days different from today was there was no public address system. The poor speaker just had to make himself heard from the stage, in the Town Hall. The Chairman of the College Council, Phil Levi - little man with a little squeaky voice - he could hardly make himself heard at the best of times. The students virtually said to him, "You've got ten minutes!" After ten minutes, they wouldn't hear any more. But nowadays with the public address system he just goes on (Ralph Hogg, W 2-15-88 090).

Students sometimes justified their activities as being essential in the face of graduation speeches that were either dull or long-winded, if indeed they were audible at all. Heckling from the crowd was an effective means of providing alternate entertainment, and of limiting the length of the speeches.

An Annual Ritual of Conflict

Neither high spirits nor inaudible and boring speeches entirely explain the motivation for this lively undergraduate custom. Virtually every speaker, good and bad alike, was subjected to the same treatment whether he ignored the hecklers, answered interjections with retorts of his own, or abandoned his speech altogether. The Vice-Chancellor, John Rankine-Brown,⁷ was one who adopted the latter course:

Professor Brown rose to deliver a speech that alas, remained largely unsaid. It

⁷ Foundation Professor of Classics (1899-1945); Vice-Chancellor of the University of New Zealand (1923-1927).

was broken after four minutes by the singing (with more gusto than was put into the Final Chorus afterwards) of "John Brown's Body." Professor Brown thereupon declined to continue his speech, informed the songsters that he was ashamed of them, and threatened to close down the proceedings and confer the degrees in private. This thunderbolt was countered by "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and an evident willingness to allow the speech another airing, but the Vice-Chancellor was adamant and proceeded to confer the degrees with unoratorical dignity.
(Spike, 47, June 1925:12)

Interjectors transgress against the etiquette that normally applies during formal speeches.

The roles of speaker and audience in these situations are quite distinct, according to the normative sociolinguistic rules that apply in western English-speaking societies at least: the speaker alone has the floor, while the audience is supposed to remain quiet and attentive, or at the very least give the appearance of being attentive. As the example quoted above shows, undergraduate hecklers sometimes managed to reverse these speaker and audience roles completely, reducing the speaker to silence.

Professor Rankine-Brown seemed to take the singing of "John Brown's Body" during his speech as a personal affront. Although we do not know what personal feelings the individual hecklers had toward him, the evidence of other graduation ceremonies suggests that there was nothing personal meant. The same scenario was repeated with uncanny similarity on other occasions and with other speakers. During the Chancellor's speech in 1905, some students at the back "attempted various tunes on their toy bagpipes." The report of the sequel reads very much like the confrontation with Rankine-Brown twelve years later:

The interrupters, after a warning, were silenced by a threat to stop the proceedings and confer the degrees in private. This dire threat was received with applause (Spike, October 1905:48).

This rowdiness during the most sacred ritual in the academic calendar was not, and was never intended to be, a wholesale repudiation of the university itself or of its ideology. Such a rejection of the system did occur at Victoria in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when New Zealand university students became caught up in the international youth movement of that era. At that time some students began to seriously question the university and its role in perpetuating the divisions and inequalities of capitalist society. These doubts included the capping ceremony, because "Capping is a symbol of the university's role in a capitalist society - to discriminate" ("Capping Disruption," Salient 36:10, May 23, 1973:7). The ceremony was also criticized as antiquated and perpetuating a ritual that was of no relevance to New Zealand. In response to these feelings, many graduates in the 1970s and early 1980s opted not to attend the ceremony at all:

I didn't go to my graduation. The prevailing political attitude was that graduation ceremonies typified a stultified and repressive education system that the university was perpetuating. It was part of the educational structure which a lot of people wanted to reject (Gyles Beckford, W-5-2-88: 671).

The contrast with the capping disruptions of an earlier era is striking. Far from dissenting from the entire capping ceremony and all it stood for, the students of these pre-war days demanded the right to attend. When the College Council decided to experiment by holding the 1927 ceremony in the College library, partly in order to keep the unruly elements out, Spike protested vehemently that the undergraduates had as much right to be there as the graduands, if not more. "These others are not students," it said, "these creatures in cap and

gown, looking as ridiculous and top-heavy as any zany ever did in cap and bells. Most of them have already turned their back upon V.U.C.; but they will be seated in places of honour and privilege, and the real student...will find the double doors firmly slammed in his face" (Spike, 50, September 1926:29). The writer is referring to the peculiarity of New Zealand's academic calendar, which means that students finish their last year of study four or five months before the graduation ceremony is held; thus by the time they are officially capped most graduates have already left the university far behind.

The hecklers criticized particular speeches for being long and dull, but they did not question the right of their elders to make such speeches. Although they parodied the serious and sententious way the rituals were carried out, they did not declare the rituals themselves invalid, nor the institution and the ideology that the rituals represented.

The undergraduate rowdy element was not trying to bring the entire ceremony to a halt. Instead, they were playing a role that formed one part of the ceremony as a whole. This component itself possessed characteristics of ritual and tradition. Although the "disturbances" appeared to be spontaneous and out of control, they were actually kept within careful limits. The setting of the capping ceremony itself provided a temporal and spatial frame around the ritual rebellion (Brandes 1988; Norbeck 1979:58). Another element of control lay in the scripts for the interjections. The Haeremai script is nothing if not orderly; the final instruction to members was to follow the leader in everything and do everything possible to preserve order. Tradition provided another frame; the example of other colleges and of past years at Victoria meant that everyone expected this as another regular part of the

program, and according to the students they were surprised and even disappointed if it did not eventuate.

Stylized and ritualized attacks on authority such as these are known by the technical term "rituals of rebellion." Max Gluckman coined this name to describe two rituals from southwest Africa (Gluckman 1963). In one agricultural fertility rite, Zulu women abandoned their normally submissive roles, took over men's work and cast off their usual modesty. In Swazi first fruits ceremonies the king was subjected to demeaning treatment, insults, and songs of hatred from his subjects, before finally his kingship and the loyalty of his people were reaffirmed.

What made rituals of this kind interesting to Gluckman was that they represented societies apparently taking risks with their fundamental social structures, by encouraging behavior that apparently defied traditional authority. Why should such risks be taken so regularly? Gluckman's answer was first to argue the rituals were not so dangerous because they took place within a larger social order that remained unchallenged and unquestioned (Gluckman 1955:109-136; 1963:112). Secondly, he argued that the rites served a cathartic function, providing a safe means of expressing tensions aroused by the social structure.

It is not my concern here to argue about the function of rituals of rebellion--others have done that (Abrahams and Bauman 1978; Babcock 1978; Norbeck 1963). My concern is with the assumptions about the performative context of these rites. Gluckman referred to them as "instituted protest demanded by sacred tradition" (1963:114). Despite their reversal of everyday norms and power relationships, the people who were temporarily removed from

their dominant positions during the rituals nevertheless approved and even demanded that they be carried out (ibid.). Victor Turner's reformulation of the concept of rituals of rebellion as rites of status reversal rests on the same assumption:

at certain culturally defined points in the seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors; and they, in their turn, must accept with good will their ritual degradation (1977:167)

The community approval and good-willed acceptance that both Gluckman and Turner posit as the basis for rituals of rebellion is not very much in evidence in the case of capping ceremony heckling. I have already described cases in which some of the targets of student disruption did not "accept with good will their ritual degradation"; far from it. Instead we have speakers who react with dismay, anger, and righteous indignation.

Moreover, the university authorities never "positively enjoined" undergraduates to play this subversive role. No matter how often the pattern of student disturbances was repeated, they never achieved full acceptance from those who were in charge of the ceremonies, and they were never given the recognition of being explicitly incorporated into the official program. The student disruptions remained just that; they remained unofficial and illegitimate.

Some of the university chiefs tried to prevent the student activity altogether. Robert Stout, who as Minister of Education and later as Chancellor of the University of New Zealand was the chief speaker at numerous capping ceremonies around the country,

campaigned vigorously to put an end to the practice, which he said "makes the judicious grieve and only the unthinking laugh." "The time has surely come," he urged students in an essay in their magazine, "when this ancient practice may well be abandoned" ("Graduation Day," Spike, 2, October 1902:6-7).

The Chancellor, the University Council, the professorial Board, and even at times the Students' Association tried a variety of tactics to bring an end to the custom. Proposals were made to establish a separate occasion for student entertainments. The Professorial Board tried to extract sureties from the Students' Association guaranteeing student behavior; to which the Association replied that they could not make any such guarantee. Occasionally sanctions were applied to individual perpetrators, when they could be singled out. Thus in 1923 the Professorial Board discussed whether to expel two students for their behavior during the capping ceremony, and finally settled on a reprimand (the record does not say what they actually did). At the same meeting a member raised the possibility of suspending graduation ceremonies (Professorial Board Minute Book, 1923).

When all else failed--and it usually did--the university decided to prevent student disruptions by shutting the students out; either by suspending the ceremony altogether, or holding private ceremonies to which the undergraduates were not admitted. On several occasions the conflict between the undergraduate "unruly element" and authority was enacted during the ceremony itself; the Chancellor responding to foolery by threatening to close down the ceremony forthwith, and the students responding with increased noise.

Robert Stout, apparently a man of some temper, was a frequent player in these

dramas. He threatened to close down the ceremony at Otago in 1885 (Morrell 1969:76-77); at Auckland in 1912 (Sinclair 1983:72); and at Victoria in 1905 and again in 1913. In 1913 he carried out this threat and conferred the degrees in private (Spike 24, October 1913, 32-34). Stout was not the only opponent to student capping ceremony activity, but he is one of the most prominent, first because he was present *ex officio* at so many ceremonies, and secondly because of his combative nature; he refused to take his "ritual degradation" quietly.

These oppressive reactions to student horseplay would seem to argue for the conclusion that what we have before us is not a ritual of rebellion at all, or at best an attenuated and dysfunctional form of it. However such a conclusion would be too hasty. Despite the best efforts of its opponents, the students kept up their rowdiness for some half a century at Victoria, and some forty years more at the older New Zealand universities (Morrell 1969: 76-77; Gardener et al. 1973: 163). One reason that Stout and other opponents did not succeed in stamping out the custom was that other people amongst platform parties and in university administration took a more tolerant view. Some speakers even offered mild encouragement to the undergraduates, like the Prime Minister in 1914 who "in a vigorous speech, congratulated the graduates and 'hinted' broadly that the proceedings were too orderly" (Spike, 1914). Such open encouragement from the platform was not very common, perhaps because it would be unseemly for such mature and dignified personages to show too much support for youthful rowdiness.

Other participants took a more balanced view, according to which undergraduate interjections were welcomed so long as they were witty and amusing, but not if they were

merely noisy. An editorial in the city newspaper supported the students against the Chancellor after the shortened 1913 ceremony, arguing that "good-humoured banter...is recognized as a legitimate part of the proceedings on such occasions" but adding the caveat that "we have no intention of defending unreasonably noisy behaviour on the part of the students" (Dominion, quoted in Spike, 24, October 1913:34). Students themselves sometimes voiced a preference for "timely and witty interjections," over "an unending stream of pointless and asinine comment" (Spike, 28, October 1915:38-39).

These responses argue for including student capping disruptions as a ritual of rebellion, but they do not wipe out the disquieting evidence of considerable opposition to the custom. Taken together, the evidence in the case of capping ceremonies suggests a revision of the concept of ritual rebellion to include conflict more centrally. Such a reformulation has been made by Ronald Dirks, who proposes "annual rituals of conflict" as a more precise term, these being:

festivals, carnivals, saturnalias, political and religious ceremonies, and other yearly celebrations containing episodes of ridicule, threat, assault, rivalry, or other conflicts that, whether solemnly or playfully enacted, at other times are not prescribed, expected, or considered proper" (1988:857).

In Dirks' formulation, agonism, the fact that one segment of a community speaks or acts antagonistically toward another, is an essential feature of rituals of conflict (ibid. 856). So far as the task of explaining capping goes, this definition is an advance on its antecedents because it sidesteps the issues of license and sanctioning to concentrate on conflict.

Capping ceremonies clearly were annual occasions for antagonistic interactions between two groups, the undergraduates and the university and community elders. It may seem problematic to describe the expressions of anger by Stout and other targets as "ritual," since this word often suggests merely the outward show of emotion, and what these people felt appears to have been genuine. In other words, they were not necessarily aware that they were following a script. Can these expressions of antagonism be included within the frame of the ritual, or are they extraneous to it?

The various participants in capping ceremonies defined the extent of the event's ritual frame differently. Many of the targets of student impertinence totally denied the legitimacy of the heckling custom and wanted no part of it. This student activity was not an authorized part of the proceedings and formed no part of their definition of the ritual event; to them it represented an aberration, a departure from the ritual's proper course. Above all, the anger, threats, and reprimands that the victims of heckling expressed were not meant to be part of any ritual or script.

However, many of the students interpreted events in exactly the opposite way. They defined the frame of the event, of the ritual conflict, so broadly that the responses of the targets, and even the actions taken by authorities after the ceremonies were over, were included in the "ritual." Within this larger definition, a vigorously antagonistic response like that of Chancellor Stout only made things better. Far from being cowed, students were spurred by such responses to even greater heights of disorder. They effectively co-opted the opposition and defused it by refusing to take it seriously. In this way they covered it with

the same humorous mantle that they gave to their own actions and incorporated it within the same frame.

The form in which student reporters described the interaction between hecklers and speakers suggests that this confrontation followed the same pattern year after year. The similarity between student reports of Rankine-Brown's angry response in 1925 and of Stout's confrontation in 1905 has already been remarked upon. It makes no difference to my argument whether the very similar construction of these two passages twenty years apart is due to one reporter drawing upon the earlier account, or to coincidence. Whatever the cause, the similarity shows that in the opinion of the student reporters, the same scenario was being played out with different actors. Other universities at this time also found this antagonistic pattern repeated at their graduation ceremonies. At the University of Queensland, "verbal exchanges between the students and Chancellor Blair were a feature of all ceremonies" (Thomis 1985:150); while at Canterbury University "clashes between the platform and the back of the hall became almost part of the proceedings" (Gardener et al. 1973: 163).

Once the agonistic quality of capping ceremonies is given its due, the assumptions about ritual rebellion being institutionalized and licensed have to be reevaluated before they can be applied to this context. Perhaps because the issue of tolerance and encouragement of ritual rebellion in small-scale societies is considered to be unproblematic, the agency of this license is often left unstated and hidden behind the passive voice. Since the license for capping ceremony disruptions was very problematic and controversial, the matter of license

needs a closer look in this context. We must consider who is providing the license for this ritual rebellion?

In the case of capping ceremonies, the undergraduates, those lowest in the university hierarchy, seized license for themselves. They justified this act variously as an ancient privilege of students, or as a pardonable defence against dull and long-winded speeches. As for the other participants, in the face of the failure of attempts to put a stop to this practice, the only course of action remaining was to accept it with varying degrees of good and bad humor. A few people offered mild encouragement from the platform, but it is doubtful that the hecklers needed it. Indeed, if I am correct that students viewed the capping ceremonies as occasions for annual rituals of conflict between themselves and the elders on stage, then they probably would have been ambivalent about any offer from the other side to give official recognition and a place on the program to their role in the proceedings.

When one looks beyond the single annual ceremonies and considers them all, a pattern becomes visible in the relationship of the undergraduate disturbances to the whole. In this larger picture, the individual personalities among the student hecklers and their targets on the platform become less significant than the social groups that they represent. As I have already discussed, the student disruptions effectively reversed the roles of speaker and audience. The people that filled the roles of speaker and heckler came from the same social groups year after year. On the one hand the speakers were community elders, people who had achieved distinction and power; on the other hand were the undergraduates, who had neither distinction nor power. This generational aspect of the occasion was not lost on the student:

It is a superstition among celebrated men of mature age to make speeches on such occasions. It is a superstition, also, among other men (not yet individually celebrated and not all of mature age) to make audible comments on such speeches. The comments are, as a rule, much more interesting to listen to than the speeches. (Spike, June 1926:17)

Thus the annually renewed confrontation between the white-haired and venerable Chancellor Stout, or some other elder, and the brash young undergraduates at the back of the hall, was nothing less than a confrontation between youth and maturity. Moreover, just as the normal roles of speaker and audience were reversed, so the young man and the mature man partially and temporarily changed places, as the young silenced their elders.

In terms of the relationships between youth and maturity, the same scenario was played out year after year, although the identities of the players changed. The individuals were less significant than the social groups they represented. These annually repeated dramas made "visible in their symbolic and behavioral patterns social categories and forms of grouping that are considered to be axiomatic and unchanging both in essence and in relationships to one another" (Turner 1977:176).

The two roles enacted each year, namely "celebrated men of mature age" and young men "not yet individually celebrated," confront one another and threaten to change places temporarily. This enactment reflects the relationship between the social groupings in reality; while youth and maturity are permanent social categories, in reality the personnel of the former group will in time succeed the members of the latter, in the ineluctable passage of generations. In the graduation ceremony, those at the back of the hall would later be occupying the positions of honor on the stage. This is the meaning of the student writer's

juxtaposition of the epithets "celebrated men" and "not yet individually celebrated;" the implication is that the latter will in fact one day be individually celebrated. Conversely, those who today suffer the verbal assault of undergraduate disrespect might have sat among the rowdy element themselves in their youth, as the students sometimes realized:

The Weir boys could think of nothing more original to do than to pull their shirts out and rustle newspapers during Mr. G.G.G. Watson's⁸ excellent speech. Mr. Watson knew exactly how to treat them. We have a suspicion that at some remote period he rustled papers himself under similar circumstances. (Salient, 1:9, June 1, 1938:1)

The annually renewed ritual heckling represented a continuous cycle of succession of one generation by another. And is this not the point of rites of passage also?

The message conveyed in the undergraduate rites of status reversal was the same as the message of the official graduation ceremony. Graduation proper was a ritual designed to mark the passage of one group--the graduands--from the lowly position of student to a higher position in society. Moreover, the official speeches and the composition of the official party in the ceremony conveyed the message, both verbally and by example, that the graduands were taking the first steps to reaching that lofty position themselves, to becoming leaders and teachers of their society.

The undergraduate performance of ritual inversion was a built-in part of the graduation ritual as a whole. The students played the role of ritual clowns to the official speakers' more solemn and sententious roles. In Pueblo ritual dramas, the kachinas and the

⁸ A graduate of Victoria College, member of the council of the New Zealand Law Society (1936-1944), and President of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (1938-1949).

clowns work together to produce a balanced ritual that is neither too unrealistically serious nor completely nonsensical (Ortiz 1972:159-160). In Victoria University's graduation ceremonies, the students provided the corrective of the ritual clowns; they provided the humorous anti-ritual to the elders' solemn ritual; the appearance of spontaneity to balance the ritual's excessive scripting of activity; the disrespectful truth sayers to correct the sententiousness of pronouncements of official ideologies. In the end, the student clowns also enacted in a witty and ludic voice the same overall message about the orderly succession of generations.

Several attempts were made to separate the undergraduate rowdiness from the formal business of graduation, for example by substituting a shortened ceremony during which the students would promise to keep silent, in return for permission to take over the hall afterwards and perform their own mock ceremony (Spike 44, October 1923:49). None of these reforms succeeded. They were misguided attempts from the start, in that they interpreted the disruptions at face value, as mere "foolery" and youthful high spirits, that would find an equally good outlet on a separate occasion. The reformers missed the point that the salience of the foolery lay precisely in its juxtaposition to the solemnity. On the same occasion, youth and maturity, ritual and anti-ritual, the serious and the ludic formed a unified whole.

THE ORDER OF THE

CEREMONY

THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 1988

at

7.45 pm

CHAIRMAN

J.J. McGRATH, QC, LL.M.

Chancellor

ACADEMIC PROCESSION INTO THE HALL

KARANGA (*see p. 24*)

GRADUANDS' PROCESSION INTO THE HALL

HAKA POWHIRI DURING PROCESSION (*see p. 24*)

NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL ANTHEM (*see p. 25*)

INTRODUCTION BY THE CHANCELLOR

ADDRESS BY MS MARY O'REGAN

CONFERMENT OF AN HONORARY DEGREE ON

DR I.A.M. PRIOR

CITATION READ BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

CONFERMENT OF DEGREES BY THE CHANCELLOR

KARAKIA WHAKAPUMAU (*see p. 24*)

GAUDEAMUS (*see p. 25*)

PROCESSION FROM THE HALL

Members of the audience are invited to applaud at the end of the presentation of each small group and after each row in respect of large groups.

Please remain standing until the Procession has left the Hall.

To alleviate congestion, it would be appreciated if those members of the audience who are attending the Graduation Supper would remain in the auditorium for a few minutes after the procession has left

Figure 1 Order of the Victoria University graduation ceremony, 1988.

GAUDEAMUS

Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenes dum sumus;
Gaudeamus igitur
Juvenes dum sumus.
Post jucundam juventutem,
Post molestam senectutem,
Nos habebit humus,
Nos habebit humus.

Vita nostra brevis est,
Brevi finietur;
Vita nostra brevis est,
Brevi finietur.
Venit mors velociter,
Rapit nos atrociter,
Nemini parcetur,
Nemini parcetur.

Vivat Academia,
Vivant professores;
Vivat Academia,
Vivant professores.
Vivat membrum quodlibet,
Vivant membra quaelibet,
Semper sint in flore,
Semper sint in flore.

TRANSLATION:

Let us be joyful therefore
While we are young;
After youth that brings joy,
After old age that brings grief,
The grave will take us.

Our life is short,
Soon it will be finished;
Death comes quickly,
It snatches away violently,
It will spare nobody.

Long live the University,
Long live the professors,
Long live every member,
Long live every part,
May they ever flourish.

Figure 2 Text of Gaudeamus Igitur in Latin and English. John Davidson of the Victoria University Classics Department made this translation for the capping ceremony program.

Haeremi Club.

Stunts for Capping Ceremony, 1918.

All members of the Club are to assemble in the Men's Creak Room and form up into line. Silence is to be maintained.

1. Entry Crocodile Walk into Hall singing "We are the Club".
2. When crocodile is in centre of isle Haka "Wikitoria" will be called.
3. "Komati" Haka will be given standing on the chairs when leader stands.
4. On Mr. Clement Watson rising to speak concerted interjection -
"What gill you have ? - pause - "Watson's three star".

at call "Rocket" - imitating a rocket.
"Sheep & Dog" (only after the shepherd had had his way)
"Sneezs"
"Along long beer"
"Sky rocket" - using the words.
"one two three and then a yawn"

5. On Mr. Wilford rising to speak, concerted interjections.

Hail King of Mount Cook;
Give us a war lecture;
Wellington & Dunlin united - Hooray, Hooray, Hooray

6. On Mr. Wilford closing his speech and after the applause has ceased the following concerted interjection, -

(1) Oh its tommy this (2) and tommy that
Together And tommy hows your soul
(1) You told me fib (2) to Dexter Gib
Together Oh what a sport you are
(1) You'll save for us (2) without a fuss
Together Ye anciente marble bar.

If Sir Robert Stout is present and rises to speak sing Mr. Boose.

Concerted interjection - "Quote Latin for us" "Its so easy".

If the Governor-General is present, concerted interjection
"Hullo me Lad".

Sing - Dear little Liverpool we love you
We like you cause your face it is so jammy.

Note. Each member to have a newspaper and at the call "over" a page is to be turned.

Interjections appropo as needed to keep the ceremony interesting.

Use all means to maintain order during the ~~speeches~~ speeches.

Figure 3 Script used by the Haeremi Club for their capping ceremony stunts in 1918.

CHAPTER FIVE

CAPPING PROCESSIONS:

"SOMETHING OF DEFINITELY IMMORAL FLAVOUR"

Victoria's capping procession was instituted in 1910, in imitation of the custom at the Universities of Auckland and Canterbury, who in turn had borrowed the idea from the University of Sydney (Gardner et al. 1973:163-164; Sinclair 1983:68). Ostensibly held to advertise the capping shows to the public, the procession quickly became established as the "most central and most public part" of capping (Salient, May 9, 1957:1). From 1910 until the 1930s, it was the opening event of Diploma Day, being followed by the capping ceremony in the afternoon and by the capping concert and ball in the evening. By the 1950s, when capping celebrations extended over a week, the procession was usually held on the last climactic day of the week.

Newspapers referred to this event as "the students' procession," but the students themselves almost always abbreviated the name to "procesh." The resulting drunken-sounding slurred pronunciation is a fairly accurate index of the tone of the event itself, which was neither sober nor respectable. With its motley costumes,

humorous drunken antics, and satirical floats, procesh was the ludic antithesis to the sober and respectable processions that Wellington witnessed at other times. In contrast to the academic procession that took place during the graduation ceremony, or that took to the streets in some other New Zealand university towns, in "full gown and mace," (Rimmer B-7-18-87-1), procesh was both informal and antithetical.

Procesh was the closest thing Wellington--or indeed New Zealand--had to Carnival or Mardi Gras parades. For sixty years, students took to the streets, watched by crowds of people, to make public displays of humor, satire, exotica, and bad taste. Specific activities that were part of every procesh--satire, drunkenness, transvestism, exchanges of missiles with spectators, and the public display of sexual and scatological subjects not normally considered appropriate in that context--make procesh comparable to the parades of Carnival, Fastnacht, Mardi Gras, and other festivals. The salient characteristic of these phenomena that will be investigated with respect to procesh is that of license. A fundamental part of the license that makes festivals possible is that which permits the appropriation of streets and public spaces for parades, dancing, feasting, and the like. As Susan Davis has shown with respect to nineteenth-century Philadelphia, "the public nature of street parades should be analyzed rather than assumed;" far from being neutral or simply given, they prove to be contested domains (1986:13). The same contest is to be found in the activity that surrounded the production and public reception of procesh for a little over 60 years.

Festivals, despite their often egalitarian and classless rhetoric, have often been arenas for the continuation of class struggle. On the one hand carnival may provide a

way for underprivileged segments of society to give event to protest, or simply to assert themselves (Cohen 1982; Gilmore 1975; Weidkuhn 1976:44). At the same time, the achievement of license in carnival and other festivals often runs into middle-class opposition, based either on aesthetic objections or on fear of the threat to order posed by licentious crowd behavior in the streets. Accordingly, the history of carnival and other street events in many places is one in which the middle class gradually gains control of the content of the parades, either by taking over participation themselves or by using force and persuasion to restrict the license allowed to festival participants (Brereton 1975; Davis 1982; 1986; Kinser 1990; Wagner 1986). In one place after another, the license afforded for reversal was gradually restricted and put under increasing control, resulting in relatively tame displays. The disorderly and licentious parts of carnival and similar events was gradually moved from the streets and public displays into private spaces (Bakhtin 1984:217-220; Burke 1978:207-243; Wagner 1986; Weidkuhn 1976).

In Europe, this history of "contraction"--to use Wagner's term (1986)--was the result of the rise of modernity and capitalism and their accompanying ideologies, specifically the modern ethic--whether Protestant or simply bourgeois--that finds ritual reversal distasteful on either religious, moral, or aesthetic grounds (Bauman 1987; Burke 1978:207-243; Peacock 1978:221-222). Opposition to popular festivity, in particular to its licentious aspects, was present before the modern period--for example in the early Church as early as A.D. 300 (Smith 1972:294-297), but it was only in the early modern period that these opponents had the power and communication resources

to translate their opposition into effective action (Burke 1978:217-218).

Students of the history of carnival have sometimes borrowed the carnival image of the struggle between carnival and lent to argue that in the modern world lent has won the contest permanently (Burke 1978; Wagner 1986). Some have gone so far as to deny that modern festivals are too orderly and disciplined to be true festivals at all, but only miserable vestiges of ancient celebrations. True festivity is depicted as a type of paradise lost, something that moderns have lost the ability to achieve, but still yearn for (Caillois 1959:97; Cox 1969:9).

Into this dismal picture stumbles procesh, to give the lie to easy assumptions about the death of public institutionalized reversal in modern stratified societies. Unlike the tamed costume parades that carnival has allegedly turned into, procesh survived for sixty years in Wellington with all its licentiousness and disorder intact. However this success did not mean that procesh was ever uncontroversial or universally accepted. The license that made procesh possible cannot be defined as universal consent or permission. License exists in several forms, including, as in the case of procesh, the presence of a significant amount of opposition. Procesh affords us an opportunity to examine the achievement and operation of license, and also to think about the nature of license itself. Although the results of the application of license in rituals and on holidays take the same or very similar forms in different places--that is, the classic recognized forms of ritual reversal--license, the mechanism that brings these things about, can take a variety of forms. These varieties include obligatory reversals, especially as a part of rituals; the granting of special permission;

and the application of alternative rules. In procesh, license included both negotiated permission that included both implicit and explicit norms limiting the extent of reversal, and also the deliberate transgression of those limits along with the unilateral seizure of license.

Procesh

I have reconstructed an account of procesh, which was last held in Wellington in 1971, using the testimony of informants who either watched or took part as well as photographs and contemporary accounts from student magazines and from the city newspapers. Information on the precise content of procesh is sparse. The contemporary journalistic accounts in both campus and city newspapers tend to be elliptical and written in a jocular tone that assumes prior knowledge of what was in, or likely to be in, the procession. The following city newspaper account of the 1936 procession illustrates this style:

Prominent personalities burlesqued included Herr Hitler ... and such figures as the Emperor 'Highly Salacious,' followed by a whiskered company, [and] 'Il Douche, Muscle-ini,' complete with Black Shirts, were the objects of much interest. Following the arrival of the procession at the Post Office Square spectators were entertained for half an hour by speakers from a lorry labelled "The League of Patience.".... 'Maybe Best' [Mae West] appeared for a moment or two to display the old school tie and become a target for apples from the crowd. (The Dominion, Saturday May 9, 1936, p.8) (see figures 1 and 2).

This report focuses on the verbal content of the floats, particularly the puns, but does not describe the costumes or what these figures looked like.

Informants who watched or were in the procession themselves do not provide much more information, rarely being able to remember exactly what they saw. At the most ex-students remembered the floats they themselves were in, or else they retained one vivid image:

I can't remember a lot about the floats themselvesOne had to do with family planning I think. The float was as of a stork's head, and on the end of a great pole was...Chris [...], clad in very little [laughs]. This was dangling over the front of the cab of the lorry as it went down the street. (Ron Hill, W-2-29-88:298)

Exact information on the time and route of procesh is available in the files of the Wellington City Corporation, since students were obliged to apply to them for a parade permit each year and those permits established exact routes to be followed. With a few minor variations, procesh traversed the streets in the city center, the streets with the biggest concentration of offices, stores, and bars. The same route is followed by most parades in Wellington, as well as by protest marches. Procesh began at noon, and lasted between one and two hours. This was the optimum time for members of the public to come and watch the event, which they did in large numbers. Until the 1950s the procession ended with the floats congregating in the Post Office square, where crowds listened to humorous speeches from the students (see figure 2).

The purpose of choosing this central route and peak time was to attract as much attention as possible. Once a city councillor, Stuart Hardy, tried to insist that procesh stay in the back streets, away from its normal central city route. "This

obviously would have made the whole thing a total waste of time," said Tim Beaglehole, who was one of the students present at the discussions. Capping was supposed to go "through the center of town at midday, and attract the attention of people" (W-5-4-88 p.1). The resulting confrontation ended with councillor Hardy's resignation after the full council overturned his decision.

Procesh consisted of a series of floats as well as a number of "walking exhibits," or costumed students on foot. The floats, either mounted on the back of trucks borrowed for the occasion, or carried by a team of marchers from the inside, were built each year using whatever materials could be scraped together and some that were supplied by the Students' Association. Some floats were produced by ad hoc groupings of individual students, while permanent student groups such as the Tramping (i.e. Hiking) Club, Chemistry students, and Zoology students all built floats on themes appropriate to their sphere of interest. The biology students, for example, built giant floats representing animal life and powered by students:

The Biological Society used to build very elaborate floats powered by people; they weren't on trucks. One of the great entertainments was to get under this blasted thing and trundle it through town. The forestry boys used to put on their boots and go front and back; and be the legs with their great clomping boots on. All the girls used to shriek around the middle; there weren't very many of us. (Interview with Julia Stuart W-3-22-88-1).

These floats often represented wildlife native to New Zealand, including the moa (a giant extinct bird), and the tuatara, a native lizard.

Procesh floats were not static tableaux but "performance in motion through space" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and McNamara 1985:2). In many cases the main object

of attention was not the floats themselves, but the costumed actors on and around them, who acted out strips of behavior, impersonated prominent personalities, and harangued the crowd in the personae of the people they were representing:

In the 1930s we had a very prominent member of the city council, Dame Gilmour. She was very interested in the preservation of New Zealand bush....So she was given the name by the students of Mrs. Flox-Gillyflower. So Mrs. Flox-Gillyflower was impersonated by one of the law students, Jack [...], and he talked as though he was her about the preservation of the bush and so on, and he had women's corsets, the old-fashioned kind that you drew together with a little metal knot and you laced them up. He was struggling with these and doing something with that, on the back of a lorry, and addressing the crowd. I can't remember what he said, but he was terribly funny. He just had everybody in stitches. (Cecily Hammond Group W3-30-88:175)

Using impersonation, placards, and especially puns, procesh satirized topical events and personalities both local and international. Some entries were aimed at New Zealand institutions such as the honors system, in which the monarch awards honors such as the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) to carefully selected community leaders. The students in the 1921 procession inverted this respectable practice by wheeling a hand cart along the route from which they distributed cardboard O.B.E.'s to anyone who wanted one (see figure 3). A placard on the cart asked "B.U. O.B.E.?" and another announced "ten per cent discount for cash," making a disrespectful commentary on the whole honors system; it implied that instead of being awarded for outstanding community service, honors go to those who already have the most money and influence.

Besides satire, the major themes of procesh were sexual and scatological.

Male students dressed as parodies of women were a regular feature, whether they impersonated the Queen, Dame Gilmour, or Mae West ("Maybe Best"; see figure 1). At other times they dressed as fairies, harem women, dancing girls, or prostitutes, always choosing roles that allowed them to enact exaggerated femininity and sexuality.

Male sexuality was another recurring theme, earning for process the designation of a "mobile pornographic broadsheet" (Spike, 1957:52). One early float included a model T Ford (a "Tin Lizzie") bearing a pair of rugby balls suspended from the bottom and a placard that read, "You can't call me Lizzie any more" (Jim Robb, W-3-11-88). Rugby balls were an apt choice since rugby is the quintessential New Zealand male activity. Sex was still on the minds of students in the 1970s, when the men's student hostel, Weir House, produced a float that depicted a factory for the manufacture and testing of condoms ("Weir Wubber Works"--see figure 4), with placards that announced, "We allow room for expansion."

Other floats represented what was known locally as "lavatory humor"; that is, they achieved humor by simply depicting scatological subjects more or less explicitly. One such float featured a student dressed as the "Maharajah of Taj Mahal." "At regular intervals he ascended his 'throne'--a brightly-painted latrine--and accepted the prostrate homage of his entourage," reported the Dominion (May 8, 1964). Taj Mahal is the widely-used nickname for a well-known Wellington landmark, which was a public restroom (and since 1980, a restaurant). The nickname is based on a supposed resemblance between the domed roof of the building and New Zealanders'

conceptions of Eastern architecture, which the Taj Mahal in India represents by synecdoche. The metaphorical association of the two structures, one famed as the embodiment of beauty, and another not especially attractive and, devoted to an unlovely function, is incongruous, but the supposed architectural resemblance between the two makes the incongruity appropriate and thus humorous. The procesh float featuring the Maharajah of Taj Mahal acted out both the exotic Indian and local scatological sides of the metaphorical pair implied in the nickname (Bauman 1983:84-94).

Perhaps the most telling feature of procesh was the way in which the gap between student performers and spectators was regularly crossed. Parades are structured around a distinction between the roles of performer and audience, and set up a boundary between the costumed actors in the event, and the non-costumed crowd who merely watch it. However, some parades, particularly those associated with festivals and whose content contains elements of symbolic inversion, challenge the performer-audience dichotomy, blurring the distinction between them, making spectators into players (Gradante 1986:185; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and McNamara 1985:2-3). This characteristic has been noted as a salient feature of carnival in medieval and early modern Europe (Burke 1978:182; Kinser 1986:3-4).

One way that this blurring of boundaries is achieved is by having performers throw things at the crowd--candy and trinkets in contemporary Mardi Gras and Fourth of July parades, or flour, dirt, and ashes in medieval and early modern carnival processions (Brereton 1975:55; Kinser 1990:66-67). During procesh flour bombs,

strings of sausages, streamers of toilet paper, and buckets of water bridged the space between student performers and the spectators. The Chemistry students' float specialized in producing noxious fumes and other substances, some of which were aimed at the spectators. One year they parodied the fire brigade of a small nearby community: "The popularly inefficient Eastbourne fire brigade, appropriately manned by our scientists, pursuing their sulphuretted fun, managed to distinguish itself by spraying a foul and unkind mixture upon the fires of justified wrath that sprang up all along the streets" (Spike, June 1930, p.46). We can imagine just how unkind that "foul and unkind mixture" was by comparing the recent capping procession at nearby Massey University, during which, I was told, the crowd was sprayed with pig effluent (Gordon Tait, W-3-16-88:290).

The spectators did not submit quietly to these ludic attacks, but returned the compliment with apples and whatever else lay at hand:

There was certainly a problem that people tended to biff [throw] things at procesh. That was one of the problems. It was a who-hit-who type of debate. There was a long- standing debate as to whether the public threw stuff at the procesh because procesh threw stuff at the public. Some procesh floats were almost literally put together as sort of offensive missile stations, as it were. The main purpose was simply to have heaps of stuff you could chuck at people (Hugh Rennie, W-4-14-88).

Once, the Students' Association attempted to put an end to this practice by threatening to publish photographs of any student who threw flour bombs at the crowd (see Salient, April 27, 1965, p.2, 4). This tactic succeeded in controlling the students' behavior, but had no effect on the public; as the student newspaper reported afterwards, "No projectiles of any kind were thrown by students during Procesh.

However, students were subjected to mud, water, and plaster thrown from building sites and office buildings. One student was cornered by members of the public and soaked with water" (Salient, June 1, 1965, p.1).

The flour, water, and the like that were thrown at the spectators were not always appreciated by the recipients. "Citizens with a sense of humour--particularly if it is as broad as the side of an elephant--thoroughly enjoyed themselves in the city [during the capping procession]," reported a journalist in 1949. But, the report continued, "at least one person seemed seriously displeased. He was a policeman...who was seen unhappily making his way back to the central police station, his uniform liberally streaked with flour" (Southern Cross, May 7, 1949:2). Although this account treats the man's plight in humorous terms, suggesting that the writer found flour bombs to be within the bounds of play, he may well have felt differently had he been the target instead of merely an observer. The target's point of view is put by one Wellington resident and university staff member who remembered watching the processions. "They would literally throw water at you, and you would get soaked if you were standing at the side of the street," she recalled. "You'd have to go back to work in [wet] clothes" (W-5-12-88-1:50).

Unhappy victims of procesh missiles had two choices; either throw stuff back, or resort to letters to the editor or to legal methods to gain compensation. Students who threw bags of flour at policemen sometimes found themselves in court, charged with disorderly behavior ("Flour Throwing Student Fined," Dominion, May 12, 1964). The Students' Association received dry cleaning bills from members of the

public who had been the target of procesh flour bombs and other missiles. These bills were paid without argument, and the cost figured into the annual receipts and expenditures for capping. It was one way of buying a measure of public tolerance for procesh.

Targets among the crowd who threw things at procesh were exploiting the playful frame of the original missiles to get their own back, while presumably also enjoying the feelings of fun that such activity generates. In fact, according to some former students, the public sometimes initiated the missile throwing even when not provoked (Hugh Rennie W-4-14-88). The person who has suddenly been hit by an uninvited flour bomb or the like is likely to have an initial reaction of shock, which is quickly followed by anger and a desire to get even. The most readily available form of retribution is to return the compliment, which in turn sets off a similar chain of feelings in the original player. Thus food fights and flour bomb battles are born, arising apparently spontaneously from one cast of a missile. Because of the desire for retribution, accompanied by the ready availability of the same play from to satisfy this desire, ludic missiles encourage active participation. Spectators who are hit with flour bombs will likely not remain passive spectators. Accordingly, the throwing of flour and the like at carnival is one of the first things to be prohibited or otherwise controlled by authorities who are concerned about unruly crowd behavior during festivals (Brereton 1975:55; Kinser 1986:3-4; 1990:66-67).

The people who "biffed things at procesh" were not merely passive observers but were getting involved in the action. While they retained their position on the

margins of the procession, to a limited extent they also became part of it. Other members of the crowd, especially young women, became part of the procesh involuntarily when students literally carried them off onto their floats. The hollow foot-driven animal floats of the Biology Society were used in this way:

Occasionally we used to capture, unfortunate passers-by. You could lift it up, and drop it down. Someone would say, "Left!" and everyone would lurch to the left and we would capture a group of typists and drag them along the road for a hundred yards, then let them go again. They were shrieking with joy, and giggling with horror. (Julia Stuart, W-3-22-88-1)

Further confusion of the categories of student performer and non-student spectator was caused by the numbers of costumed students who roamed the crowds alongside the procession, either selling capping magazines or extorting contributions for that year's charity collection. "Bothering people in the streets was part of the deal," recalled Ron Hill. "You'd have a fistful of capping books to sell, and you'd stand over people until they'd bought the thing" (W-2-29-88:644).

Denizens of procesh often left the parade altogether either to patronize the pubs along the route or to enter the stores and rearrange their contents. Occasionally a student would try to ride his horse into a bar along the way and be forcibly ejected by the management. Riding a horse into a bar and ordering a drink for it is reported as a "traditional cowboy prank" associated with some American rodeos (Lawrence 1990:231-232). On another occasion, "a caterpillar with scores of hairy legs in football and tramping boots...tried to get into the bar at DeBrett's Hotel. The door was too small, but it encircled a traffic officer on a scooter singing 'For He's a Jolly

Good Fellow'" (Dominion, May 11, 1963, p.15).

When procesh passed by, spectators and businesses were changed by the experience. Students did not always pay for the drinks they consumed in pubs on the procesh route--as is shown by bills that were presented to the university afterwards. It was common practice for procesh performers to enter department stores and purloin small articles. Women's corsets and the like were a favorite target, but not the only one:

In Wellington in those days [the 1920s], the fish shops weren't in shops as we know them. They had fish slabs on the footpath. When the procession was going past, certain students would just nip into the fish shop, and hook - the fish shops didn't cut their fish up; they had whole fish - and as they went along the streets those on the lorries would have fishing rods, and [laughter] those on the ground would hook the flounders, and the various fish onto them, and they would process through the streets of Wellington, holding up these fish. (Cecily Hammond Group W-3-30-88:191)

During the 1926 procesh a character described as "the American classical novelist, Mr. Vane Bray" (presumably a parodic representation of Zane Grey) and his party were responsible for hooking fish. During the speeches at the close of the procession these trophies were thrown at the crowd, who promptly threw them back: "A superior form of humour was provided by throwing the results of Mr. Vain Bray's sportsmanship about. The crowd took part in this with zest and enjoyed itself immensely. The exchange of compliments ceased about half past one..." (Spike, 49, June 1926:15-16).

Procesh tended to blur the distinction between performer and audience, and blur the line that defined where the spectacle ended and ordinary reality began. In the

words of Mikhail Bakhtin, like carnival of old, procesh had no footlights (1968:7). The frames enclosing procesh--that is, the "footlights" that marked the separation between procesh and everyday life, between participants and spectators--were fragile and permeable ones. Although the temporal boundaries were strictly adhered to--the procession lasted only an hour or two and broke up immediately afterwards--spatial boundaries were constantly being challenged. When the students left the parade they carried its licentiousness and inversion into surrounding spaces and infected the sober mundane reality of the city as a whole. In the words of one graduate who watched the procession as a schoolgirl in the 1930s, "Wellington just went wild" (Cecily Hammond Group W-3-30-88).

Public Reception of Procesh

Nothing else in Wellington rivalled the students' procession in clowning and licentiousness. Especially considering the fate of similar licentious festive parades in the modern world, the existence of procesh seems to be an anomaly. It is worth examining the public and official response to this extraordinary annual event. How did the students obtain the license for these displays? This examination will show that although procesh continued for over sixty years in Wellington, the license on which it was based was never unproblematic.

Procesh was popular. Contemporary journalistic reports, the recollections of participants, and photographs (e.g. figure 2) all indicate that procesh attracted large crowds of people who took time off work, paused in their lunch hour, or made

special trips into the city to watch it. When the organizers moved the starting time up a half hour one year, the crowds were noticeably thinner (Evening Post, May 9, 1958; Beaglehole 409). We can only guess who actually made up the crowds. Some informants remembered watching procesh when they were still in high school.

"When I was at school at Wellington Girls' College, we took the morning off school to watch it. It was a traditional thing. Whether it was legitimate or not to take the morning off, we didn't inquire into that" (Cecily Hammond Group W3-30-88:118). The licentiousness of procesh seems to have spread to these pupils and encouraged them to play truant.

The press generally treated procesh as entertainment, publishing photographs of the floats and jovial accounts of the jokes. These reports extended the public audience of procesh even further. Sometimes the reporter would compare the procession to earlier efforts. "The parade seemed a little poorer than in previous years," opined the Evening Post in 1968. "The floats were very hastily prepared and the students failed to bring up any particularly fresh points. There were the same old pokes at the same old topics ridiculed in previous years" (May 2, 1968: 17). This reporter took the attitude that procesh was a performance, to be judged for the skill of its execution--skilful construction of floats and wit being the yardsticks. Sometimes procesh was criticized because its humor was forced, or because "many a jibe and joke was lost because the dominant idea behind a float was not readily perceptible to the bystander" (Evening Post, May 11, 1963:15). Overall however, the attitude of these press accounts was a favorable one, and they also reported that the crowds

generally seemed to enjoy the spectacle. However, there is other evidence that procesh was not universally accepted and was often the center of controversy. A poll conducted by the university psychology department in 1954 confirms that public attitudes to procesh were mixed. 63 per cent of the 404 respondents indicated that they liked procesh. Skilled and unskilled workers were more likely to favor it (70% and 62%, respectively) than either professionals (51%) or commercial workers [i.e. clerks, typists and office workers] (57%) (Evening Post, April 29, 1954). Among former students opinions varied as to the public reception of the processions. Some remembered that they were very popular:

The processions always attracted large numbers of people, if they were half way decent, meaning large in size; often they were semi-indecent from other points of view. In Lambton Quay, you might get people lining the street four or five deep as it went by. It was generally regarded as good clean fun. I don't think anyone got upset about it (Ron Hill W-2-29-88).

Hill was a student at Victoria between 1953 and 1960. In contrast, Hugh Price, a 1953 graduate of the university and long-time resident of Wellington, remembered the public's response to procesh quite differently:

My impression was that Wellington was quite hostile to these events, and took them as an imposition. That the traffic was held up, or loud unpleasant noises were made when people were going about their businessThis was taken as a rude intervention into a normal day. For that reason it gave all the more pleasure to those taking part in it (W-3-4-88).

Although procesh was popular, it never enjoyed unanimous support. Both

private citizens and city and university authorities had negative reactions to procesh at times throughout its history. Letters to the correspondence columns of the city papers are widely-used forum in which private citizens express their opinions (Ausubel 1965:21, 111); and this forum was widely used to express disapproval of particular procesh floats that "went over the top"; that is, exceeded the license that the individual spectator was willing to allow. One such float in the 1936 procession attracted a storm of controversy. The float in question was deemed so offensive that none of the many correspondents who complained about it felt able to actually describe it. According to the Dominion editorial, the float was one "that no respectable newspaper would either dream of displaying on its illustrations page or attempt to describe in words." John McCreary, who was a student at the time, remembered what it was:

They had a large float: "Flat out on Ethyl" with a semi-naked woman and a man and so on. That got it [procesh] banned. It wasn't political, it was pornographic (W-4-12-88).

"Flat Out on Ethyl" appears to have been an advertising slogan for gasoline, but as the students' float made unmistakably clear, the phrase can also refer to sexual intercourse by means of a pun on the word "Ethyl" and on the phrase "flat out."

The "Ethyl" float, indeed the 1936 procession as a whole, proved extremely controversial. Over the following few days, the Dominion's letters to the editor column rang with condemnations of the procession in which it had appeared. According to correspondents, it was "the most objectionable [exhibition] yet presented

to Wellington. Hardly a decorated float but embodied something of definitely immoral flavour....it cannot be correct that our womenfolk and children, let alone decent-minded men, should have such displays exposed to gaze in the city streets" (letter from "Citizen," The Dominion, May 11, 1936, p.10). "Another Citizen" agreed, "It is high time that our streets were rid of such muck" (May 12, 1936, p.11). Another citizen asked, "Why should the dirty-minded youth among our college students be allowed to offend with impunity the community he disgraces?" (May 13, 1936, p.13).

These comments imply that "Ethyl" had gone too far; the float, and others like it, had broken the tacit limits surrounding the license extended to procesh. When this particular limit is stated explicitly, it is phrased in terms of a contrast between wit and vulgarity. The Dominion editorial described the Ethyl float as "a needless offence to people who can laugh at a joke but decline to see anything funny in attempts to parade vulgarity as wit" (May 1936, p.10). The difference is between vulgarity and wit is explained in a 1970 editorial, also commenting on procesh. "There have always been plenty of critics around ready to condemn each and every Procesh as indecent," it states, "but the average citizen will swallow a good deal of honest bawdry as long as it makes him laugh" (Evening Post, May 29:1970). In other words, it is not the sexual and scatological topics that are considered inappropriate in procesh, but the manner in which they are treated. To be acceptable, they must be presented in a humorous fashion. However, as the furor over Ethyl shows, the treatment must not be too explicit; there must be a certain amount of indirectness and disguise in the

reference to the taboo topic. When the content of floats is too blatant a transgression of the norms relating to taste and obscenity, that is, when it treats taboo topics too directly, audiences eschewed criticism of the float's aesthetic or humorous merits; these were eclipsed by outrage at the content itself. Such reactions no longer evaluated it as a performance but treated it purely as an infraction of law or morals--not something that was performed poorly, but something that should not have been performed at all.

Besides editorials and letters to the editor, a further outlet for public indignation was to appeal to the university authorities to control the students. "Surely the time has come, Sir," continued "Another Citizen" in a letter to the editor of the Dominion, "not only for the students' association...but for the college authorities and the police to review the whole matter of capping processions, and, if no process can be devised to eliminate undesirable features, prohibit them altogether."

Outside the university, both the city council and the police had the power to prohibit procesh by simply refusing the required parade permits. The controversy over Councillor Hardy's 1954 attempt to deny students a permit unless procesh kept to the back streets shows that many city councilors supported the students and procesh, or at least were not vehemently opposed to it. This sympathetic attitude is shown by Mayor Fowler's reply to a student application for permit to revive procesh in 1978. "Naturally as a University graduate myself," he wrote, "and having had two sons graduate from Victoria University, I would like to see and I would support a capping procession" (Heppleston, WCC file). The parade permit issued by the

council laid down rules for the time and precise route, and required entrants to obey the instructions of traffic officers at all times; but it said nothing at all about the content of the parade. That was left to student discretion.

There were a few occasions, when the political situation in the country was unusually tense, when the police placed bans on procesh, fearing its likely effect on public order. In 1932 and 1933 the Commissioner of Police countermanded the city council's permit for procesh, perhaps because he feared that popular frustrations engendered by the depression would erupt into violence during the disorderliness of procesh. Proposed marches by the Unemployed Workers' Union were also being quashed at this time. Riots did break out in New Zealand cities in 1932 (Olssen 1981:275). The last of these police bans was in 1951, during a state of emergency declared over a national strike by waterside workers (Chapman 1981:357-358).

It is unclear whether the police feared that students in the procession would start a riot, or whether resentment among the unemployed and others who were harder hit by the depression would be provoked into violence at the sight of students, a relatively privileged group, playing the fool. Perhaps a public street procession of any sort, with the license that it implies, was seen as a possible incitement for people to seize unauthorized license and take to the streets for purpose of direct protest instead of playful satire, and the police doubted their ability to restrict license to procesh participants or to contain it within the parade's temporal and spatial limits. This official response confirms that procesh was recognized as being disorderly and antithetical, and echoes similar fears of carnival and public reversal elsewhere

(Babcock 1978:22-24; Cohen 1982; Davis 1978:34-36; Gilmore 1975; Kaplan 1984).

The occurrence of bans imposed by the Professorial Board, however, shows that procesh had a constant tendency to go beyond the limits and get out of control even in otherwise uneventful periods. As early as 1922 the Board was receiving letters from the public that complained about students being drunk and disorderly, harassing spectators, and kissing women. They also received a bill from a hotel on the procesh route, for drinks consumed by students but not paid for (Professorial Board Minute Book, 1920-23:142-143). These incidents led the board to ban the procession for the next two years.

The next procesh was in 1925, and in the aftermath of that the board suspended a student for one month because of his impersonation of the Governor-General. The minutes of the relevant Board meetings do not reveal what was offensive about this act. In 1927 and 1928 the Board forbade procesh again, for reasons unknown. In 1929 procesh was reinstated after the Executive of the Students' Association guaranteed that students would not interfere with members of the public, or enter shops, hotels, or other buildings. After the police bans during the depression procesh was revived in 1934, but the infamous "Ethyl" float of 1936 and the attendant public outcry persuaded the Board to ban procesh once again, this time indefinitely. The event was reinstated a few years later.

For the most part, students were left to govern themselves during procesh, as in all of their activities outside the classroom. The Professorial Board remained uninvolved as possible, except when they were goaded into action by complaints from

the University Council (the university's lay governing body), or from the public. Most of the time however, they left the control of procesh to the Students' Association Executive. asking them to guarantee the good behavior of its membership.

New Zealand university authorities have never taken the active role in disciplining students that is taken by deans and the autocratic university presidents in North American institutions. At the turn of the century students at the University of Toronto celebrated Halloween for a few years with street processions that matched procesh in their rowdiness. Within a few years the college president forbade this custom outright, backing up the interdiction with the threat of canceling all campus social events; and with that the students' Halloween celebration ended for good (Walden 1987). Such a fate never befell procesh, whether because the Professorial Board essentially supported the custom or because they lacked the power to enforce a permanent ban in defiance of student wishes.

Organizing Mayhem

The Students' Association was responsible for organizing procesh, including obtaining the parade permit, finding businesses to lend them trucks for the floats, supplying some of the building materials for floats, and directing the procession. The Association also had the task of trying to limit the amount of unbridled licentiousness in and around the procession, and of standing between individual students and the wrath of city and university authorities when things did go too far. Specific

techniques used to improve the image of procesh included vetting the floats before the event, and, since 1958, combining procesh with a street collection for some public charity. The charity collections, which raised sums in excess of one thousand pounds, were designed as "the excuse for the acts of vulgar exhibitionism that accompany Procesh" (Salient, [April] 1971:1). The tactic seems to have worked, for there were no more bans of procesh after the collections became a regular feature.

In other words, procesh, like other carnivals, was deliberately organized and subject to constraints and controls. However, the Students' Association experienced considerable difficulty in controlling their membership and in fashioning procesh in the image that they desired. Despite unremitting efforts to keep the content of floats within the limits of good taste, to improve the style of float construction, and to control the behavior of procesh participants, procesh transgressed again and again in each of these areas.

Evaluations of procesh in the student journals follow a consistent line of criticism, which argued that procesh was an advertisement for the university and had an important impact on relations between the university and the city; therefore students needed to put more time and effort into planning and building floats in order to put on the best possible show. Procesh elicited criticism of this type throughout its history. Just two years after procesh was inaugurated in Wellington, the student reviewer bemoaned "the general lack of enthusiasm" for procesh among students and their "unwillingness to help in the work of preparation" (Spike, 22, October 1912:39). The 1935 reviewer argued that "to make a proper success of a procession, still more

funds are needed and still greater preparation called for. The preparations should cover at least a month and their aim should be to give continuity to the whole turnout" (Spike, 63, 1935:42). In 1969 the procesh controller was still calling for improvements: "It's about time we had some original ideas for floats...and a little more work done on them before procesh day" (Salient, 15 April 1969:12).

It was sometimes suggested that procesh floats should be designed to fit into a single unifying theme each year, in order to put on a better show for the city. Such a neat and well-planned procesh never eventuated. The choice of topics for the floats remained up to each group of builders, and the arrangement of floats in the parade appears to have been largely random. If organizers did create a prearranged order of march, individual floats would defy it and push in wherever they chose. Some parades, like the formal academic procession, display the participants' view of the world order and their social hierarchies (Stoeltje and Bauman 1989), but procesh displayed randomness rather than order. It was a syndetic display, to use Robert Plant Armstrong's idea. Elements in parades of this type are juxtaposed one beside the other rather than drawing meaning from their relation to other elements in a structured display (Mechling and Wilson 1988:306-307).

The inherent disorderliness of procesh can be seen not only in the random arrangement but also in the style in which floats and costumes were constructed. Photographs reveal a very motley crew of participants, apparently dressed in whatever costumes could be had from the drama club wardrobe and prop room. The floats appear to be hastily assembled, flimsy and rough-looking, which is how many

informants also recalled them. This rough and ready characteristic may explain why people often could not recall floats in detail. Student critics blamed the unpolished appearance of the floats on hasty construction, and again urged greater effort.

"Wellington will never learn to love Victoria until she does her best every time she puts on a public performance," said one student critic, who called for greater student participation as well as for more time and care to be spent in building the floats.

Victoria's procesh, he continued, compared unfavorably with those of the other colleges: "Our floats have an air of having been rigged up in a hurry;...the general effect is weak, ragged, and a bit pathetic" (Salient, May 9, 1957:1).

So flimsy and impermanent were procesh floats that, in the face of Wellington's wind and rain, they sometimes collapsed even before the event got under way (Spike, June 1921:25; Dominion, May 9, 1969:4). The same was true of the home-made rafts in the raft race, which was occasionally held during capping in the 1960s and replaced procesh in the capping programs after 1971. Most of the rafts would sink before completing the course, in an event that one former capping controller described as "organized mayhem" (Spiro Anastasiou, W-2-29-88-2:155).

One of the earliest raft races was in 1968:

Indisputably, this was a farce...a spectacle of inept craft construction and the inevitable subsequent sinking provided amusement for participants and a large crowd of spectators (Malcolm Grover, "Report of the Social Controller 1968" VUWSA Annual Report for 1968, n.p.)

Like procesh, the raft race was felt to be "the one event that took capping out into the community" (Spiro Anastasiou, W-2-29-88-2:231). As in procesh, participants took along supplies of rotten food and flour bombs with which to attack each other.

The flimsiness of procesh floats is no illusion; these constructions were usually not meant to last (Servais 1984). At the parade's conclusion, the floats were thrown away, sometimes with unexpected results:

My main memory is the year we had a fish. We did the capping procession, and then somebody said, "We are not walking all the way back up to university with this blasted thing." And it was too big and well-made to smash up and put on the back of a truck, which was the usual end of capping processions. So we dumped it on the steps of Parliament. Went away...

The Clerk of the House--poor old man--rang up the university and said, "Please remove this flotsam and jetsam you've left on the steps." So the tough nuts, the Forestry guys, went down, and they dropped it off the end of the wharf (Julia Stuart W-3-22-88-1).

The rough, hastily-constructed appearance of the floats was part of the metacommunicative frame (Bateson 1972) that allowed procesh to be interpreted as temporary, and assured observers that the festivity and inversion of the floats would not be permitted to extend into the real world beyond the temporal frame that bounded procesh. Like balloons, firecrackers, and other temporary and fragile objects associated with festivals, the flimsy procesh floats conveyed the momentary and temporary essence of the festival (Abrahams 1987:179-180).

There was another side to the interpretive frame that procesh floats conveyed, namely that they were spontaneous. Arguing from the point of view of the student practitioners, a student critic found the best possible interpretation of the habit of building floats at the last minute: "The float builder...has been an improviser at all times, and for this reason there is always a welter of invention and fancy, coupled with a complete lack of shape and form in joyous, unpremeditated result" (Spike,

1957:52). Since the floats were so obviously the products of hurried, last-minute work (or "Pressure-building," in the words of one student critic), they were framed as the results of a spontaneous outpouring of joy (ostensibly at the success of the graduates), or of youthful high spirits. This frame offered the public a way to excuse procesh and dismiss any threat to normalcy that it might seem to pose; rather than seeing a conspiracy, they were offered the interpretation of an unpremeditated outburst, of youthful high spirits, which by its association with children was interpreted as both trivial and temporary.

A dialectic can be observed between critics' and organizers' efforts to make procesh more attractive, and participants' defiance or neglect of these requirements. This defiance insured that procesh never became a spectacle. A similar dialectic has been noted in the history of festivals, including European carnival and New Orleans Mardi Gras, between presentation and representation or spectacle. In these places the latter has won out over the former. Parades have become more tightly controlled and the floats more spectacular, with the result that participation of both actors and audiences has been replaced by passive watching (Kinser 1986; 1990; Mesnil 1976). Although procesh did not set off city-wide celebration and dancing in the streets, it did preserve a variety of features, notably the throwing of missiles into the crowds, and the excursions of procesh participants into adjacent businesses, that blurred the distinction between performers and audience.

The missiles and excursions were also the target of criticism and attempts at control by procesh organizers, who argued that "procesh is to amuse, not abuse, the

public" (Salient, April 27, 1965:4); that is, that it should be a spectacle. However, a significant number of students rejected such efforts as undignified pandering in an attempt "to woo and win the affections of the Wellington public" (Salient, May 27, 1953, p.2). After the incident in which a spectator's collar-bone was broken, the Executive of the Students' Association pledged to the Professorial Board that it would guarantee student behavior in future processions. This move was received with scorn by other students. A writer in the student magazine Spike argued that the Executive had promised more than it could deliver. They "can obviously give no guarantee that the students won't get drunk; that they won't break windows; that they won't kiss old ladies who don't want to be kissed, and affectionately crack a collar-bone or two in passing" (Spike, Sept. 22, 1922:11). Similarly, the censorship of floats was defied by some students, like the residents of Victoria's male residence hall, Weir House, who pushed into the parade with their float depicting the manufacture and testing of condoms, in defiance of the Association who had banned it for being "a bit off" (Weir House Magazine, 1970; see figure 4).

The Devolution of Procesh

These cases of defiance of authority, the unfinished appearance of the floats, and the tendency to get out of control and go too far, are seen by some informants as signs of the degeneration of procesh. This degeneration is cited as the reason why procesh was abolished in 1970 and, with the exception of a revival in 1971, has not been held since.

Margaret Stewart was President of the Students' Association in 1970, when students voted to abolish procesh. At that time relations were deteriorating between students and the public due to the increased activism of students and their vocal opposition to New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War and in sporting contacts with South Africa, to name two of the major political issues of the day. At the same time, she said, students were putting less effort into procesh:

Although procesh even into '68 had been well organized and well run, and the floats had been interesting and well-made, by 1969 it had really deteriorated. It was just a whole lot of drunk students standing on the decks of trucks, and no effort made to decorate them....As a result of all those sort of factors, we decided to cancel procesh and to leave it until such time as people were prepared to put more into it. But it's never revived, which is a shame. That was 1970.

The deterioration in the quality of procesh only increased public antipathy:

We were really getting bad vibes from the public. I think they had slowly been getting sick of the drunken behavior. They took capping stunts - funny ones - in stride, but the sight of a procesh that was not well organized, and that basically was a bunch of students yelling and screaming on the backs of trucks, didn't appeal at all (W-4-12-88-2).

In contrast to her earlier opinion that procesh had been well-organized and well-built as late as 1968, this statement suggests that there had been a steady deterioration in the public reception of procesh. Other informants also took the view that public tolerance finally ran out because procesh had been degenerating over a number of years before it was finally abolished. The signs of this degeneration were an increase in the drunkenness and uncontrolled behavior by parade participants; a decline in the quality of the floats; and an increasing amount of vulgarity. One Wellingtonian

recalled that procesh became so bad that "It got where I wouldn't go to town if there was a capping parade on." "I know I always used to go out of the office and watch," she recalled, "but it just got worse and worse, and the crowds got less and less, because it wasn't funny, and it got dirtier and dirtier.... (W-5-12-88-1:260).

Ralph Hogg was one who saw the processions over several years, first as a student (1925-1931) and later as a local schoolteacher and university liaison officer. "The processions were very popular," he recalled. "Some of them were witty: very bright ideas. But I think they went to pieces after a while, after years. Students getting drunk, and darting into shops, and harassing the sales girls." Later still, the deterioration had continued to the point that students no longer put much effort into their displays:

When I was on the staff, and could see the organization of the student processions, they were pretty poor on the whole....they didn't ever seem to give much thought as to what was to go on each float. They were just sketchily improvised, and stuck on a lorry, assembled, and off they went. Seem to me to be just a drinking spree from then on (W-3-15-88; A130; B170).

People often used the image of a drunken pub crawl to describe the final state that procesh reached. After procesh was abolished, large scale pub crawls featuring hundreds of student participants became a regular part of capping programs. A pub crawl is an example of the "procession and station" style of parade (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and McNamara 1985), in which the exaggeration of numbers and amounts consumed transform drinking and drunkenness into display forms. The difference between a pub crawl and a procession is that participants in the former appear to do

little or nothing to show they are aware of or interested in the presence of an audience. However, the habit of procesh participants halting at a series of bars along the route was a common practice from the early days (eg Spike, 39, June 1921:25).

In other words, many of the people that I talked to in Wellington applied an emic devolutionary premise (Dundes 1969) to procesh. Their comments implied that procesh was once witty, well-done, and relatively well-controlled, and then "went to pieces." This devolutionary assumption begs the question of why procesh should have developed in this way, resting on the unstated idea that such degeneration was inevitable. A second implicit assumption is that this degeneration aroused more public hostility for the event, which led to its final abolition either directly by means of an outright and permanent ban, or indirectly by encouraging students to kill the tradition themselves.

Did the standard of wit and effort put into procesh deteriorate between 1910 and 1971? As I have said, the contemporary accounts are allusive and elliptical, and provide little concrete information about what floats and costumes looked like. Photographs of procesh are available, but they provide selective record since probably only the best floats were photographed. However, a comparison of photographs dating from 1919 and 1935-1936 (figures 1, 3) with one from 1970 (figure 4), suggests that students in the earlier processions seemed to have paid more attention to their costumes than was the case later, but the difference is not striking.

The number of floats provides an objective if rough measure of the degree of student involvement in, and hence support for, procesh. It is a rough measure at

Table I. Number of floats in procesh, 1953 - 1971.

1953	12
1957	15
1958	12
1962	30
1963	25
1964	15
1966	18
1967	36
1971	10

best, since we must rely on the estimates of the organizers or the reporters, and because other factors such as the severity of the weather also influenced the final turnout. Figures are available for the number of floats entered in each procession between the years of 1953 and the last procesh in 1971. In this eighteen-year period the number fluctuates between a low of ten floats in 1971, and a high of 36, which was in 1967. There is no steady movement from a large number of floats in the 1950s that decreases as we approach the present, but instead a constant fluctuation (table 1). This evidence does not support the idea that procesh devolved gradually.

Other signs of the presence of disorder in procesh are found throughout its history, not just toward the end. The annual evaluations of procesh made by organizers and observers include repeated criticisms of the vulgarity, disorder, and last-minute float construction. Criticism of this kind was being made within a few years of the first procesh held in Wellington, and unruly student behavior during procesh was generating complaints to the university as early as the 1920s.

Similarly, the evidence does not support the argument that official and public tolerance for procesh gradually ran out. On the contrary, the incidence of bans

between 1910 and 1951 indicates that tolerance was strained from the beginning. There were no more bans after 1951, however, which is surprising if we accept devolutionary assumptions about the decline and fall of procesh. If official bans are a measure of the licentiousness of procesh, or of general public attitudes toward it, it would seem that in its last years it was more uncontroversial and well-behaved than ever before, or that its popularity had increased, not declined.

There are two sets of opposed characteristics that apply to procesh. On one of these poles procesh is orderly, well-prepared, witty, and (more or less) sober. At the other extreme it is disorderly, poorly prepared, vulgar, and drunken. Both the evolutionary and devolutionary premise assume a unidirectional development from one pole to the other over time. Either procesh began as an amateur, rough display and grew into a sophisticated, entertaining show (a thesis that no-one would seriously propose); or it developed in the opposite direction until it finally became so bad it had to be stopped, which is what my informants in Wellington tended to think happened.

A third way of viewing the development of procesh is to accept the "degenerate" elements as constant features of the event, which oscillated constantly between the extremes of order and disorder. Any particular procesh would contain elements of both; moreover, the balance between them varied a certain amount from year to year. Thus every few years procesh appeared to be on the decline in terms of the numbers of floats, the level of student participation, and the type of public reception. This low point was followed by a burst of activity as organizers cleaned up their act. A single float, like "Flat Out on Ethyl," would provoke so much

outrage that there would be less tolerance even of the other floats, which were no worse than those in the previous years.

From an objective standpoint, it would seem that procesh became more daring over the years. The "filth" that caused a ban in 1932, namely the "Ethyl" float, seems tame in comparison to the "Penis Power" float of 1971 that displayed a six-foot "Scrotum Pole." But I need hardly point out that prevailing standards relating to sexuality and permissible limits of expression changed radically between the 1930s and the 1970s. Procesh retained the same position relative to the prevailing level of prudery of the day. At all times, procesh maintained a position as close as possible to the limit of what, according to community standards, was permissible and tolerable. Sometimes the students miscalculated and went "over the top," resulting in outright bans imposed by the Professorial Board.

At any point in time, observers noticing the vulgar and disorderly elements in the current procesh would assume that they were recent deteriorations, applying a ready-made devolutionary premise to interpret what they saw. Similarly, now that procesh has been abolished informants pick out the same disorderly elements and, applying a devolutionary premise, suggest that these elements were the dominant ones in the last processions, and that they were the cause of its abolition.

This view of procesh, in which forces striving for order and attempting to reduce the event to a spectacle contest against opposite forces of disorder, exemplifies an essential dialectic between order and spontaneity in festivity. Spontaneity, the opposite of planned and goal-oriented behavior of everyday life, has been called an

essential characteristic of festivity (Pieper 1965:5). On the other hand, Hermann Bausinger argues that the spontaneity of carnival exists only the perspective of the sentimental observer; a complex network of organization, order, and precise roles underlies this surface (1980b:240-242).

The apparent contradiction inherent in a phrase like "organized mayhem," which was often used to describe procesh, is resolved with the explanation that organization and order are necessary to clear the space within which spontaneity and disorder can take place (Turner 1987:84). Lawrence's study of the Pasadena Doo Dah Parade shows this dialectic in operation. Like procesh, the Parade lacks a formal parade order or theme, emphasizes spontaneous performances, and features entries that intentionally lack polish, favoring home-made and amateur components. However, despite its explicit ideology of rule-lessness, the Parade has had to develop an increasing number of rules in order to assure its survival (Lawrence 1987).

One can also speak of a dialectic between spontaneity and organization in festivity, in which at different times and in different parts of the total event one or the other pole is dominant. Both the organizers' calls for more control and the tendency to head "out of control" are perennial aspects of festivity (Mechling and Wilson 1988:305).

License and Transgression

In rejecting the assumption that procesh degenerated from a well-controlled spectacle to a drunken rampage, I am also rejecting the idea that its "degenerate"

features--vulgarity, unfinished appearance, and out of control behavior--are necessarily signs of a dysfunctional tradition. Instead, I argue that these features are inherent, essential components of the total event. This view is supported by comparative data from carnival in Europe and other public events that feature ritual reversal, during which similar activities went on.

These elements of reversal, notably those featuring dirt, sex, and aggression, have been suppressed or brought under control in many places with the advent of modernity, due to ideological antipathy to reversal as well as political considerations. Some scholars feel that this development involves an element of loss, and that the tame spectacles that result are a perversion of true festivity (e.g. Caillouis 1959:97; Weidkuhn 1976). However, these suggestions contain an element of romanticizing the degenerate aspects of festivity. Robert J. Smith argues that the ways in which anthropologists have treated these subjects amounts to a form of euphemism, arising from "a deep-seated desire to preserve a semblance of respectability while discussing such amiable subjects as transvestism, drunkenness and sex in the bushes" (1975:3).

Ritual reversal is more attractive when considered in the abstract than when it is marching down your street and liberally dusting you with water and perhaps more unpleasant substances. When an institutionalized display of reversal and disorder hits the streets of a modern, complex society like Wellington, there can be no question of community members treating the event as a ritual obligation, as tribal groups are said to do. Even if concerted efforts of suppression are absent, it is not surprising that an event like *procesz* generates sanctions and expressions of opposition.

In the case of procesh festive license cannot be defined purely in terms of permission and consent. Such a focus does not adequately account for the degree of disorder accompanying reversals, or for the existence of negative community responses to it. Permission was there, in the form of formal permits that the student organizers negotiated with the city council and sometimes with other authorities. These permits were explicit licenses, containing explicit rules governing the spatial, temporal, and behavioral boundaries that students were expected to adhere to. There were also implicit norms concerning what was acceptable in the content of the floats and in student behavior during procesh, norms whose existence is revealed by the outcry and sanctions that followed transgression.

If the granting of permission, subject to these rules, was all there was to the license of procesh, we should not expect the amount of public and official opposition that it encountered. Something is missing. In addition to permission and alternate rules, the license of procesh also included the breaking of rules. Student performers did not stay within the limits agreed upon for procesh behavior; in their assaults upon the spectators and their extracurricular activities outside the narrow limits of the parade route, they went beyond the terms of their license. A striking example of this rule breaking is recalled by a long-time resident of the city:

On the last year before they banned it for Victoria, the students rushed into Kirkaldie's, where people were having lunch in the restaurant there, and before the poor unfortunate guests had time to have their second course, the students had rushed into the kitchen, and had mixed up all the foods in the kitchen. The sweets and the meats and everything else. There was a dreadful fuss about that. I think it was after that occasion that capping was banned at Victoria. (Cecily Hammond Group W-3-30-88).

License was not negotiated for excursions like this one; permission was neither asked for nor granted, but instead unilaterally seized. Such transgressions lack the optional characteristic that distinguishes the realm of play and leisure, which is the usual location of ritual disorder and reversal in modern societies; to the extent that capping demanded its right to exist and involved outsiders without their consent, to that extent it approached the domain of obligatory ritual reversal (Turner 1974).

The transgression and out of control aspects of process were not the result of misunderstanding or ignorance of the norms governing it. They were deliberate and self-conscious transgressions of these norms. Students deliberately tried to see how far they could go during process. Instead of permitted disorder, license in these instances is licentiousness (Abrahams 1981:318). Licentiousness is a kind of transgression; according to Robert J. Smith it "lies between proper and criminal behavior....Licentiousness may be considered as the upper extreme of improper behavior, the lower extreme of criminal behavior (1972:291). The salience of licentiousness, of transgression, lies not in the lifting of everyday norms, but in the continued presence of these norms as a foil to the transgressive behavior.

A number of theories explain the attraction of reversal in cognitive terms, as a means by which people play with the cognitive categories that underlie everyday thought and action, glimpse what lies behind and outside these orders, and taste something of disorder (Babcock 1978). Some of the attraction of this experience is lost when forms of reversal are institutionalized, since institutionalization is itself a form of order. The satisfaction that people get from breaking rules is dissipated when

this transgression is reduced to obedience to another set of rules. As Caillouis said, the point of ritual reversal is that actors are aware of their departure from normalcy and of their deliberate transgression of taboos (1959). However, this point is lost when such transgressions become so institutionalized that they become alternative rules. The desire for disorder drives people to subvert and challenge even the alternative rules and boundaries of festive license.



Figure 1 Transvestism; a student poses as "Maybe Best" after the 1936 procesh.

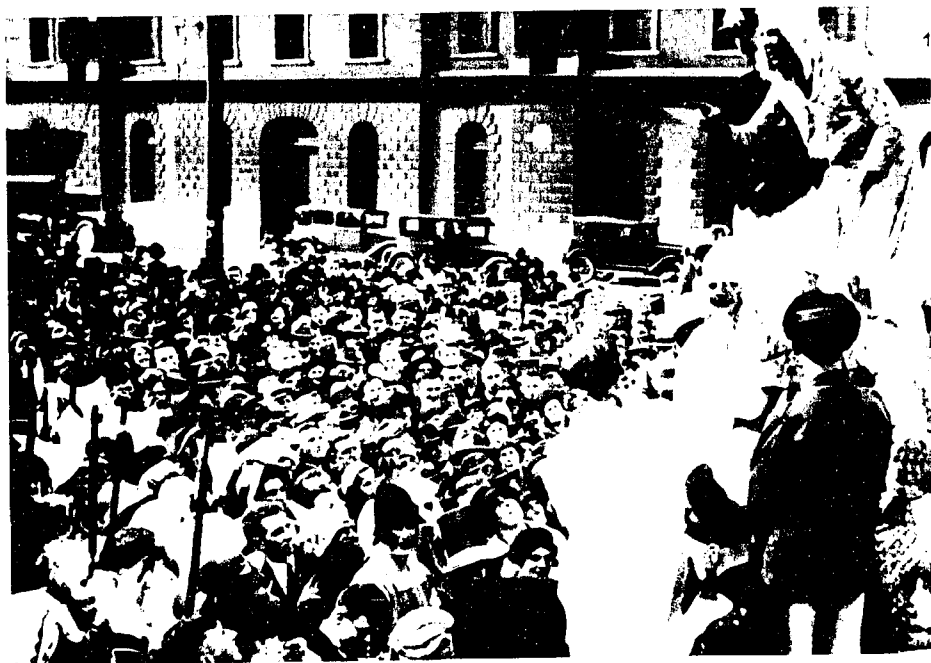


Figure 2 A student harangues the crowd gathered in the Post Office square at the conclusion of procesh, 1935.



Figure 3
"O.B.E. Distributing Agency," from the 1919 procession.

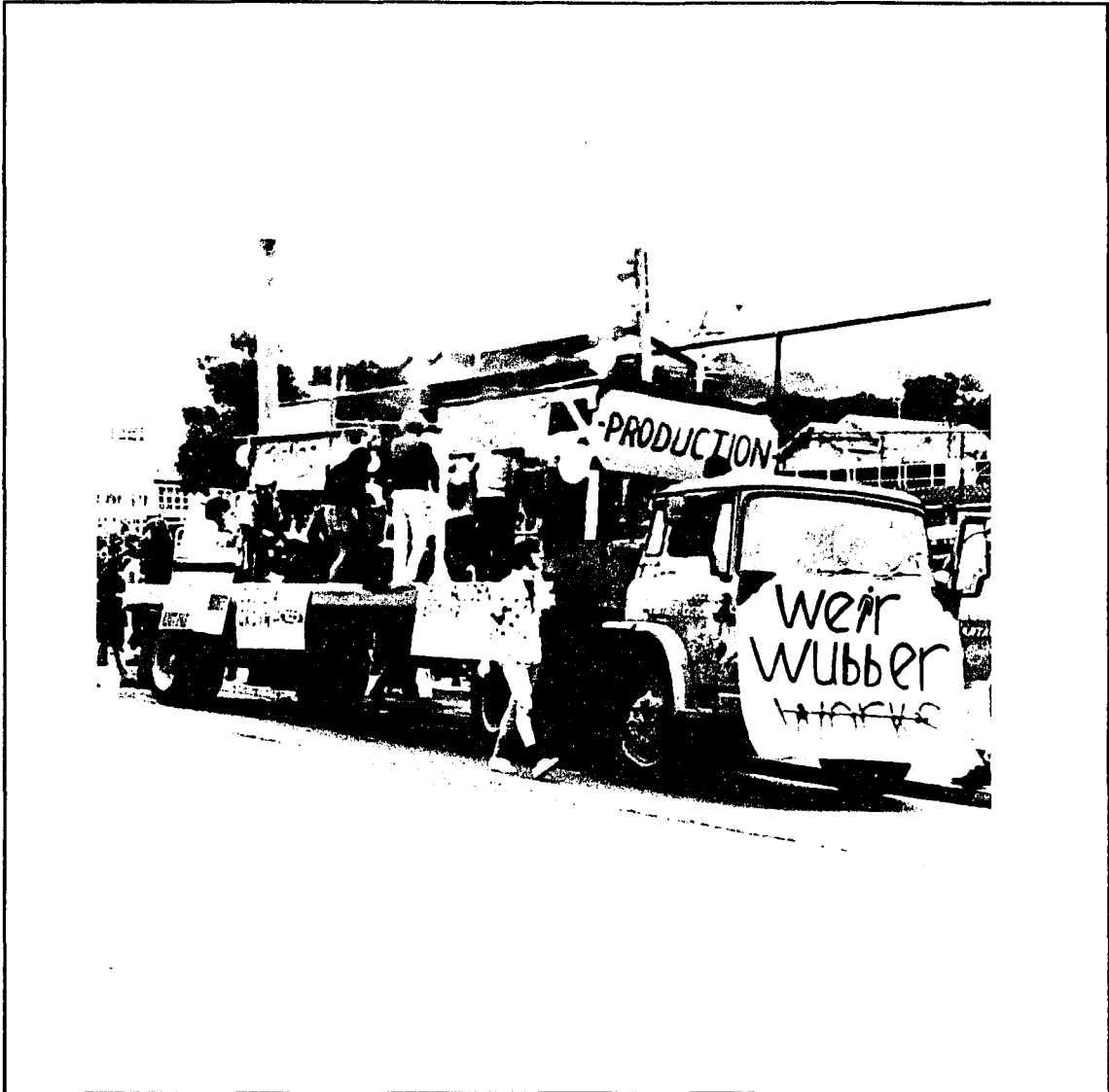


Figure 4 The men's residence hall, Weir House, contributed this 1970 float representing a factory for the manufacture and testing of condoms. It bore signs proclaiming "We allow room for expansion."

CHAPTER SIX

CAPPING HOAXES: UNBENDING THE MIND

One weekday morning towards the end of April 1976, residents in the suburbs of Wellington awoke to find an official letter in their mailboxes (see figure 1). Others received cards from the Wellington regional Water Board informing them that the city water supply would be shut off the following weekend, and that the water would be dirty when supply resumed the following Monday. To correct this problem, they were told to present the card to any pharmacist to obtain a free milligram of detergent. A day or two later, the city's morning newspaper announced that, "Wellington's water supply won't be stopped this weekend, and swine flu is not racing through the capital's population. These suggestions, believed to come from university students celebrating capping week, were swallowed by many residents yesterday " (Dominion, April 29, 1976:9).

Two years later, also at the end of April, this "Notice to Householders" was distributed to suburban residents:

By The Cats Act 1977, Section 13(b).
The Wellington City Council hereby gives notice that all domestic, pedigree or mongrel cats must be registered on or before the 3rd day of May, 1978. Registration shall be \$1.00 per cat, per household.
Failure to comply with this Regulation by 3rd May will result in a

penalty registration fee of \$2.00. All registration forms are available from the Post Office.

DATED this 5th day of April, 1978.

The notice was signed by the secretary for the Town Clerk. A copy of this notice was found in the files of the Wellington City Corporation. Next to it was a copy of a letter sent by the Town Clerk to a resident of a Wellington suburb, which said:

I believe you are the Mrs C_____ who sent me a cheque for \$1.00 to cover the registration of one silver tabby female cat, and that you sent this because of a "Notice to Householders" which was presumably left in your letter box.

I am sorry to say that the whole exercise is a Victoria University capping celebration hoax.

The Council has no proposal to introduce the registration of cats and I return your cheque for \$1.00.

The three hoaxes described above are typical of the type of hoax stunt that became popular among Victoria University students after 1959. This chapter will examine the type of capping stunts that were played during this period, including who were the targets, the methods used to set them in motion, and the results. The data for this account comes from stories that students and ex-students told me; from newspaper reports; and in a few cases from primary documents. Some of these documents are reproduced in the figures. Secondly I will discuss the existence amongst students and ex-students of an oral tradition concerning capping stunts, and examine the stories themselves for what they reveal of how students evaluated stunts. Finally I offer an interpretation of the meaning expressed by stunts and stunt stories.

The first salient feature of these hoaxes is that they were designed to fool large numbers of people. The targets are not individuals, but groups of people, most likely

people not known personally to the hoaxers. The targets in the stunt stories are never mentioned by name, but are identified by what they do or where they live.

The choice of stunt targets is not completely random; typically, the same two groups of people are hit year after year, namely commuters and householders or property owners in the suburbs in and around the city. This exoteric, inter-group characteristic marks the fundamental difference between capping stunts and the pranks played by students in other contexts. For example the pranks played by students at M.I.T. and CalTech (Steinberg 1987) are confined to the campus and have students as both jokers and targets.

The topics of the stunts are often those that one would expect members of the target groups to be concerned about. Traffic-related stunts, for example, exploit the commuter's desire to get to work:

1. I think this happened at Victoria. About '74-75 '76. Students distributed leaflets in suburbs in capping week, which were made up as WCC bus department vouchers. If you live in this area, you're entitled to one free section bus ride on such and such a date; it was an anniversary of Wellington City Transport, purportedly. They distributed hundreds of them. It might have been the day or the night before the day that they were valid, so you'd only get the people who look in their letter box before they go to work. What happened was, allegedly, hundreds of people in Wellington then presented them to bus drivers in the morning. Some bus drivers accepted them; some said, no this is a farce, I don't know anything about it, get off my bus. It was a debacle; everything came to a standstill.

That in itself was amusing; but the twist was, it was the anniversary of the city council the following week, and the city council had planned such a drop anyhow. And in ignorance went ahead with it, even after this melee of the week before, they still went ahead with it the following week. You got the same joke twice, like an echo. But this time they were valid; but again the bus drivers said, no no no, you tried that last week; I'm not putting up with it this week; you had the same joke twice. I think that that was true; I'd like to think it was. I was at Victoria at the time.

(Told by Gordon Stewart, W 2-25-88 033; see figure 2 for a copy of the leaflet.)

Other stunts played upon householders' concerns to preserve their immaculate lawns and protect their property; and their affection for their pets:

2. Capping '84 - Some People Will Believe Anything

The month is May. Notices have gone out from the "New Zealand Seismic Activity Monitoring Bureau" regarding the testing of sub-soil in the Wellington area. The testing is to be done with a Gryolitomobile, a wonderful piece of sophisticated, high-technology machinery, operating independently below ground level. Wellingtonians were asked to place metal objects on their lawns to stop the machine drilling up the topsoil of their property.

To assist the Bureau further they were asked to take soil samples to the Post office in sealed plastic bags, to contain 1/2kg soil and to have the resident's name and address on them....About 50 people rang Doug Lorne, he being the director of the Bureau¹.

Calls were received from a lady with a nervous cat who was advised to keep her pet inside until after the testing, and from another lady with a "frightened" dog, who was advised to take it in and put her wire wove out on the lawn. A lady rang up to say she only had a metal bucket and would that do? A gentleman rang to say that he had borrowed a lot of pipes from his brother-in-law who was a plumber, and he had put these out but none of his neighbours seemed to have put anything out....

(Weir House Magazine, 1984:30).

3. A year or two ago - I don't remember if it was last year or the year before - there was a circular distributed, advising householders that there were serious cracks in the Karori reservoir - the holding tank for most of the city's water supply - and it had to be drained as quickly as possible; would everyone please turn on their taps. And if you had a fire hydrant outside your house, would you please ring the fire department to get them to come and turn on the fire hydrant [laughter]. I understand the fire station logged something like 117 calls [laughter]. (Told by Nigel Mander, W 2-15-88 570)

¹ The phone number supplied connected callers to the student hostel where hoaxers lived, and where they were waiting to answer the calls.

4. The early '70s there were some very clever pranks pulled. There was one where Kelburn houses were given a very official looking letter saying that the hill was going to be flattened out and that it was going to be the site of Wellington's second airport. Which is one of the most bizarre things possible. [Laughter.] But because it was so cleverly presented - as usual, students were ingenious in getting hold of official letterhead paper - they were quite good at doing a bogus letter.

The one about Wellington airport got quite serious; a lot of people took it very very seriously. Because they were being told that their house was in the way and it was very unfortunate but there would be compensation, but that would be after negotiation. So people were outraged; people were ringing up the city council and saying, excuse me, what's all this going on? And the council said, we don't know anything about it. They were into the paper; and it rumbled on for a couple of weeks. Because it was put in words that were just plausible enough to believe.

The essence of the good capping stunt was where you did something like that, it was just plausible. Couldn't utterly dismiss it straight away.

(Told by Gyles Beckford, W 4-2-88 380)

5. Another one was the putting the cats down one. That was good, because people were really upset over that one. They wrote up a very official - this was all done on the right paper you understand, it was written on Health Department paper and typed up neatly - and it takes a bit of organizing to get people to distribute about five thousand of these. On Wellington City Council paper you wrote a letter saying that feline flu was really rampant, in a certain area, and that the city council had determined that all cats in this area had to be disposed of. Put down. And they gave you a little voucher; if you took your cat to the vet, the vet would do it for nothing. [Laughter] Or you could put your cat in a box and drop it off at the city council and they would humanely dispose of the mog².

Well of course, people got this thing here and they went berserk; they weren't putting their favorite cat down, and they were ringing up to see if there were any vaccinations, or what the story was. So that was another one. (Told by Gordon Tait, W 3-16-88 165)

The use of mass-produced letters, fliers, or leaflets, hand-delivered overnight to mailboxes in the city suburbs, is the single most common device used to put

² Slang word for cat.

capping stunts in motion. Some stunts relied on signs or posters (see figures 4 and 5) in the down town area. Both letters and posters have the advantage of reaching large numbers of people, thus increasing the number of targets for the hoax and statistically improving its chances of success. In comparison to posters however, letters have much more room for detailed information to enhance the fabrication, and instructions that determine how the victims should respond (see figure 1). Probably it is also harder to ignore or discredit an official letter, albeit a form letter, than an impersonal poster.

Both letters and posters have the further advantage of allowing the hoaxers to stay anonymously behind the scenes of the hoax, and communicate with their targets indirectly. Only one capping stunt that I know of required student hoaxers to impersonate others and confront their targets in the flesh. This was "Operation Shockstop," carried out by Weir House students in 1959 and the first stunt that meant to deliberately fool the public. As described by the Weir House Magazine for that year (p.50ff), this stunt involved students setting up a bogus speed trap during the morning rush hour for motorists commuting into the city along the busy Hutt Road, one of the main arteries leading into Wellington. Students set up a fake radar and posed as traffic officers to stop cars and issue speeding tickets. According to the student writer, drivers genuinely thought they had been pulled over by the law until they read their "tickets," in which the "fine" was that one had to buy a student capping magazine or donate to the students' charity collection. Almost 200 vehicles

were stopped in an hour, after which the police arrived and closed the operation down.

The difficulties of succeeding in this kind of direct impersonation are evident. With capping stunts as with any other type of fabrication (Goffman 1974), an impersonation is likely to be spotted because of the variety of ways in which discrediting clues can be communicated to the targets. The students might look suspiciously young for the role they were playing. They might find it difficult to keep a straight face, or otherwise act in ways inconsistent with the character and roles they are playing. Impersonal and indirect devices, such as letters, are easier to control because they contain fewer communicative channels through which discrediting clues can get across.

In 1988 a group of students abandoned plans for a stunt that also called for students to impersonate authoritative figures in the flesh. The plan was to create a fake radioactive leak from a medical laboratory in the inner city. Ten students dressed in protective clothing would be directing traffic away from the leak into narrow side streets. The stunt was abandoned because of the expense involved in getting convincing-looking radiation suits, and the necessity of having an older person in the group who looked like he was in charge - "So we didn't look like students." Moreover, some of the conspirators got cold feet when they considered "problems with the police." The original plan was to have the stunt operating successfully within ten minutes, because after that the police or traffic officers would arrive. For

all these reasons, this stunt, like many others, died in the planning stages. (Phone interview with Stephen Dixon, group representative, W 4-10-88.)

Typically, stunts are conceived and carried out by students acting in a group and anonymously, not by individuals. There is a practical reason for this, in that the scale in which stunts operate demands a high level of participation. A 1962 stunt involved 10,000 "City Council Notices" that thirty students delivered to homes all over central Wellington and in the suburbs (Salient, 29 April, 1966:12). Another stunt that took place in 1963 required 5,000 copies of a pamphlet allegedly leaking secret government defense plans ("Holyoake didn't like 'secret' pamphlets," Salient, 15 April, 1966).

Moreover, the perpetrators of stunts tended to remain anonymous, even to their fellow students. When the student paper Salient reports on the stunts carried out each year, no names are ever mentioned:

But what about the stunts? Well, maybe you'll have a chuckle over some of the following.

Cat owners were required to register their pets; the Karori Post Office was inundated with phone calls and had over 100 people dutifully turn up.

Traffic was diverted off Mulgrave St. and onto the motorway, first exit Petone.

The doors of Parliament were chained and padlocked.

The Cuba Mall fountain was filled with soap suds, while passers-by commented that it was a good thing the fountain was finally getting clean.

A VD scare was perpetrated on the inmates of Willowbank House. ("Capping," Salient, 15 May, 1978:13)

The use of the passive voice in this account effectively obscures the identity of the hoaxers. Similarly, the stunt stories that I was told also used the passive voice or

identified the perpetrators merely as "students" or in other vague terms. The only stunt story in which the perpetrators are named is number 7 (below), the only account in which the narrator was personally involved in the stunt.

I argue that anonymity is a crucial characteristic of capping stunts. It is reasonable that as stunt stories continue to be told amongst new generations of students the identities of individual student hoaxers would be forgotten. However, even contemporary accounts of stunts, like the one from Salient quoted above, omit the names of the hoaxers. Since students were encouraged to register their stunt plans with the Students' Association, in advance, the capping organizers would usually know who the specific people were behind each stunt. Nevertheless, the identities of the hoaxers was not revealed even after the stunts were complete. Thus the 1988 announcement of the stunt that was judged the year's best named the hoaxers only as "Weir House," referring to the hostel in which the hoaxers lived and in whose name their stunt was carried out. This anonymity and group orientation as regards the perpetrators of capping stunts is a characteristic feature of stunt narratives, and I think of the actual stunts as well.

When it comes to carrying out stunts, anonymity has a practical value, in that it allows perpetrators to escape any personal repercussions of their activity. One stunt, carried out in 1985, resulted in Ministry of Transport officers quizzing the Students' Association as to the identity of the culprits. The students had manufactured a copy of the key used to switch traffic lights on and off. With it they traversed the city during morning rush hour, turning all the traffic lights off. As

authorities discovered what was happening and turned the lights back on, the students retraced their steps and turned them off again. The result, according to the student who told me about it, was that "traffic was at a standstill. It was chaotic." He then went on to relate the aftermath of the stunt:

There was quite a bit of an investigation about it. The MOT were very keen to find out who did this; the stunt hadn't officially been registered, so the students' Association said, "We don't know, but I wish we did, 'cause it was a very naughty thing to do." It was a continuing discourse in the newspapers for quite a while, about three or four days, which is quite a while for a simple stunt, just asking, who did this? Why did they do this? What's the problem?
(W 5-4-88 122)

Although the narrator knew the perpetrators of this stunt, albeit "vaguely," and he had heard about the stunt "straight from the horse's mouth," he did not reveal their identities. This omission is in keeping with the impersonal and anonymous character of capping stunts; from the point of view of students, the only important thing about stunt perpetrators is that they are students, and they are so named in virtually every stunt story I have come across.

The role played by the Students' Association in the traffic lights stunt is typical. The traffic officers went to the Association to find out who was responsible for the prank because the Association was the only body likely to have that information, and because it was arguably responsible for the activities of its members. In order to have some control over stunt activity, the Association required everyone to register their stunts with them before carrying them out. Registration made one eligible for the prize for the best stunt. In return for registering your stunt, the

Association promised to protect individual students from any unpleasant consequences of their stunts, by paying any bills for damages or providing legal representation if students were charged. However the Association announced in each year's capping program that it would take no responsibility for unregistered stunts.

How did the students achieve such success in their hoax stunts? In the first place, I can point to the sheer numbers of people who were targeted. The number of letters or fliers that were copied at the Students' Association office and delivered to mailboxes numbered in the thousands (e.g. Rennie). With such a saturation of the population, it was inevitable that at least some people would fall for the joke. The approximate numbers of people fooled by each stunt were probably only a small percentage of the total number of hoax letters sent out. It is difficult to determine accurate numbers of victims, however, because student stories are likely to exaggerate the numbers in order to underline the success of the stunt, while people who were taken in would be understandably loath to advertise the fact.

Students used various methods to lend credibility to their fabrications. They were careful to pay attention to details such as use of language appropriate to the institution being impersonated, references to relevant laws (e.g. The Cats Act), and the appeal to science, which was used with great detail in the 1976 urine specimens stunt (see figure 1). The students and ex-students who told me stunt stories often emphasized the importance of using the right letterhead when composing bogus letters.

Another device was to use scare tactics. As one informant commented, "You look at something that people are going to panic about and forget that it's capping. You've got to get around the date, like April Fool's Day. You can't do a classic April Fool's joke; you've got to think" (Paul Horan, W 4-19-88 497). Thus people were told that the dam was about to burst; that their property was about to be bought up and bulldozed; that their cat had to be registered by the next day. All these suggestions are likely to produce panic, and in panic people are liable to act first and think later.

The most common authenticating device of all was to impersonate authority figures of one kind or another. In their stunts, students impersonated (usually by indirect means such as letters, rather than in person) the Wellington City Corporation and its various offices; national government bodies such as the Health Department and the Ministries of Education and Inland Revenue; and sundry other bodies, both real and imaginary. The appeal to authority lent credibility to the fabrications. It also called upon the powerful legal sanctions normally wielded by these authorities to encourage targets to follow instructions. The threat of sanctions was usually implicit, but was sometimes made explicit; thus a 1986 letter allegedly from the Inland Revenue Department, asking recipients to fill out and return applications for personal identity numbers, specifically mentioned the heavy fines and other penalties that would result from any false statement.

A hoax, to be successful, must induce its targets not only to believe that the fabrication is the real thing, but also to act on that belief in such a way that their false

belief is made readily apparent. If targets do not act decisively on their belief, they can later claim that they were not fooled at all, but this claim is much harder to sustain if they have already acted in a way that belies that claim.

The typical capping hoax stunt encourages its targets to respond in various public ways. One of the earliest stunts performed in Wellington was in 1962, when householders were sent letters in which the city council announced a special pick up of any garbage too bulky for the regular collection. Those who complied by putting such items outside their front gates were displaying a visible sign that they had been fooled, as did the householders in 1984 who put metal objects on their front lawns to stop the subsoil sampling machine from digging them up (number 2).

Often capping stunts require the targets to interact with other people such as bus drivers and train conductors (number 1), employees at hospitals, and post offices, the fire brigade (number 3), and the city council (number 4, 5). In this way this second group of people become embroiled in the stunt as secondary targets. Even though this second group may not themselves be fooled, the stunt will still work - although when some of them were it made the joke even better (number 1). When two groups are embroiled in a fabrication, it becomes even more effective. The net result is confusion for all concerned, and consequent disruption of normal business.

As a consequence of the indirect methods used to put most stunts in motion, the students themselves did not participate in the unfolding of the hoaxes and could not directly witness their effects. The hoaxers themselves would have to read about

their success in the paper. In fact, some hoaxers assiduously collected newspaper clippings that were related to their stunts (e.g. Rennie, Anastasiou). Where, then, was the pleasure for the student hoaxers? The answer lies in the stunt stories, which assume importance as the most common and accessible method for students to vicariously experience stunts. This avenue was open to both the hoaxers and even more to the large number of students who did not participate in any stunts. Most students, like the public, learned about each year's stunts only after they had taken place.

Most of the variants of stunt stories presented here come from personal interviews that I conducted with students and ex-students in Wellington, 1988. Stories of this kind are commonly told amongst students, usually in the third person and many of them are still being told by students years after the stunt took place. Some stories are popular even though the events they recount apparently never took place, at least not in Wellington:

6. [Interviewer:] There were some workmen out somewhere on the Terrace digging up the road...
[Nigel:] I've heard that. Someone goes up to the workmen and says, "Look, just between you and me there's some students going to come along dressed up as policemen, and they're going to tell you to move on."
Then the person goes to the police station and says, "I'm a little worried. There's some students dressed up as workmen digging a hole in the road. Do you think you could go and move them on."
Then the students just lie low or watch from a distance while the policemen and workers, both suspecting the others of being imposters, try to move each other on and try to resist being moved on.
It's a great story, and I expect it's got its roots in reality some time, it sounds quite plausible, but I've heard it talked about so many times, it's become apocryphal; I wonder if it actually happened in Wellington or decades ago in Britain, in Oxford or Cambridge. I don't know of

anyone who was actually there, but lots of people seem to know someone who says they were there.

(Told by Nigel Mander, W 2-15-88 613)

7. The one that was mentioned in Salient, of course was always talked about. I don't think it was ever done. That's where your workmen and policemen tell each other it's the other one and they have this big square-off. Everybody had heard it; it was like the McDonald fried rat sort of story. No-one believed it.

(Told by Gordon Tait, W 3-16-88 054)

Numerous other people, both students and ex-students, knew versions of this stunt.

Notwithstanding Gordon Tait's assertion, some people did believe the story was based on a real capping stunt, although some people were unsure whether it happened in Wellington or in some other city in New Zealand or overseas. Otherwise continued to enjoy the story even though they considered it "apocryphal" or perhaps an urban legend ("like the McDonald fried rat sort of story"); as one graduate put it, "If it's not true, it ought to be."

Narratives about stunts display the patterns of tradition and variation familiar to students of oral tradition. The urine specimen stunt of 1976 (see figure 1) was one of the stunt stories that I collected most often:

8. There was the one about the urine sample, which was always a little ripper. In which you wrote to these people saying that the Health Department was doing certain checks; and they wondered if the householders could collect a sample of urine and send it or take it into the hospital, on a set day. Well of course, the hospital was inundated with all these samples, that they perhaps didn't really desire or know what to do with. That was one.

(Told by Gordon Tait, W 3-16-88 p.2-3; a student at Victoria 1970-1973.)

9. The swine fever samples. Little circulars in the letter boxes around Kelburn, Karori, all round this area. Back in the '70s, early '80s.

"Owing to the outbreak of swine fever in the greater Wellington district, would you mind taking a urine sample to your nearest post office, within the next twenty-four hours." All the post offices inundated with people coming in with big jam jars, or little Marmite jars, or 44-gallon drums or whatever they had [laughs]; and quietly getting up to the counter and bringing them out of their handbag...[laughs]. That one I think is fairly true.
(Told by Gordon Stewart, W 2-25-88 141; student at Victoria 1974-1978; staff member since 1981.)

10. There were other bogus things like telling people that they were doing surveys. There was one about the Health Department doing a survey about some disease, and people were asked to take a urine specimen down to their local clinic. Which provoked the usual outrage; inconvenience to little old ladies and gentlemen, the aged and infirm couldn't cope, it would worry them.
(Told by Gyles Beckford, W 5-2-88 430; student at Victoria 1971-1977.)
11. We were talking about this in the office. Capping stunts lately have tended to be more clever than outrageous. There was one where they sent leaflets all round some suburb, getting people to turn up with urine samples; one premises got inundated with people turning up with urine samples. Or it might have been send it in by post. But it's that sort of thing, as opposed to outrageous, up-front sort of stunt.
(Told by Michael Mann, W-3-17-88 242; has been "in and around" Victoria University from 1976-1988; police prosecuting sergeant.)
12. There was also a tale, I don't know if it's true or not, but I've heard lots of variations of it, and that was a swine fever epidemic, and calling for urine samples, and I think they were to be delivered to the Reserve Bank building.
(Told by Spiro Anastasiou, W 2-29-88 517; student at Victoria 1977-1978; capping controller 1978.)
13. Another time there was a report of some kind of poisoning scare or something, and people were asked to take urine samples to their nearest post office. That gets its humor out of embarrassing people on a more blatant level than just tricking them into putting out plates on their

lawns. Nowadays there's so many post offices closing down, maybe the post office needs to be made the butt of a joke³.
(Told by Nigel Mander, W 2-15-88 088; student at Victoria off and on from 1975-1988; president of VUWSA 1988.)

The above variants of this story all assume that the stunt was performed in Wellington, and their details resemble the example of the 1976 flier that I found in the Victoria University Students' Association files (figure 1). The letter asks residents to take urine samples to either the hospital, a Health Department office or clinic, or a post office. All of these variants refer to urine samples, and almost all name post offices or the hospital or local clinic as the place to deliver them. In 1976 there was an international epidemic of a variety of influenza known as swine influenza. This fact, along with the existence of the letter, plus the fact that the stunt was refuted in the city newspaper that year, argue for assuming that the stunt did take place more or less as described here, and that all these variants can be traced, directly or indirectly, to that event.

A similar stunt was carried out at Massey University in Palmerston North, between 1960 and 1965, according to someone who was involved. This account is one of the very few first-person stunt stories, in which the identity of the hoaxer is revealed:

14. Now I remember a good one. It was G-- C-; it got him in a lot of trouble. We obtained the Department of Health letterhead and we sent out a survey in appropriate envelopes to a sample of people throughout the North Island. And mailed this letter with a survey to individuals

³ In 1988, when this story was recorded, the New Zealand government voted to close one third of all the country's post offices, as a cost-cutting measure. The plan provoked widespread criticism, but was put into effect nevertheless some months after this interview.

inviting them to send in stool samples [laughter]. To send them to the Department of Health office in Palmerston North, we they'd be analyzed for some terrifying disease that was threatening the country.

The design of that was very sophisticated. I was involved with some of my friends in this. The letterhead was acquired, the letter was typed up, the survey was designed and all typed up, all the materials were as authentic as possible. And a mailing envelope, a waterproof mailing envelope was - maybe it was a plastic bag. The ultimate downfall of the stunt was that the envelopes burst in the mail [laughter].

And so the first inkling we had that things were going wrong was when the Post Office clicked on to the fact that this was a Massey students' stunt. And so there were some red hot calls to cease and desist. And then the Health Department of course got involved, and there was accusations of forgery, and people were going to be charged. On all kinds of terrifying charges. Nothing ever came of it, but there was a lot of scurrying to clean up, in more ways than one, and tidy things up. But I think a promise that they would cease and desist basically got the thing shut down. I can't remember whether this was associated with capping or just a thing we dreamed up.

(Told by Tony Rimmer, B-7-18-87-2 p.1: student at Massey University 1960-1965.)

15. At Massey the great medical samples stunt took place. They put fliers in letter boxes all along a street that was near - I don't know whether it was a river or a lake - and told the people that because the ducks in that area were all suffering from a rare avian disease, they wanted to check whether the people in the street were all healthy and would they please each leave a urine sample in their letter box on a given morning for collection. And nearly all of them did [laughs]; I'm told it was Massey. (Told by Margaret Stewart, W 4-12-88-2 353; student at Victoria 1966-1971; president of VUWSA 1970.)

Finally, I heard of a similar stunt played at Canterbury University in Christchurch. The introduction of "Ecuadorian bananas" as the culprit recalls migratory legends about spiders and other nasties being brought into a country by means of imported foreign fruit, carpets, and the like. The reference to bananas that have been poisoned resembles recent rumor and legend about product tampering and

candy and fruit for Halloween treats being booby trapped or poisoned (Degh and Vazsonyi 1983):

16. The great ones are always the well-planned ones. They defy bureaucracy. Like the Christchurch letters; the Health Department ones. The first Health Department one I heard was, someone had worked in the Health Department over the holidays, and had some of their letterheads. This was in Christchurch. They sent away some letters, saying that Ecuadorian bananas had, I think, were poisoned or, were somehow off, and you had to bring in a urine sample to the post office. And so, I think it was in Fendleton - in the poshest area of Christchurch - and about ten, twenty people came with their urine samples in milk bottles, and things like that. In post offices. And that would have been mid-seventies I think.
(Told by Paul Horan, W 4-19-88 474; student at Massey 1986-87; Victoria 1988- .)

By examining which elements of these stories are invariant and which are subject to variation, we can determine what are the most salient points of this stunt for the students and ex-students who tell the stories. Reduced to its most invariant core, the story is about urine or stool samples in unlikely places. The place that is named in most variants is the post office, the mail, or a letter box (numbers 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16). Although the hospital and various health department offices and clinics are also named in the original letter as places to bring your specimen, only two stories mention these destinations (numbers 8 and 10).

Why are post offices preferred by these story tellers as the destination for the urine samples? The reason is that, of the alternative places named in the original letter, the post office is the most unlikely and incongruous place for urine specimens to end up, while a hospital or health clinic is where one would normally expect to find them. The other place named as the destination of the specimens is also an

incongruous one, namely a bank (number 12). The incongruity thus portrayed in the stories -sometimes in loving detail (number 7) - is a source of humor. The original stunt and the stories about it also depict a concrete and literal example of the confusion and mixing of cultural realms and cognitive categories that characterize festive events.

These stories and others like them are part of a thriving oral tradition amongst students and also ex-students. Asked where they had heard their stunt stories, informants told of hearing them "at a party [where] talk turned to some of the stunts we'd heard of" or "I heard about it from someone who may have seen it or may have heard about it from someone else" (Nigel Mander, W 2-15-88 527). Gordon Stewart told me that ex-students also shared stunt stories with each other: "These conversations come up regularly. 'Those were the days of capping; the halcyon days when we did the following'" (W 2-25-88 075). Another ex-student explained that "you sit around and reminisce with people and these tales come out" (Spiro Anastasiou, W 2-29-88-2 530).

How often these stories were told is hard to say. It seems reasonable to assume that as capping drew closer, and capping organizers began urging students to start planning their stunts, these stories were repeated. A novel of student life at Victoria depicts students before capping 1963 trying to think of a stunt, complaining that "everything's been done before" and one person telling a story about a stunt he was involved in the year before (Lay 1988:38-39). Capping organizers encouraged

this practice by including in their announcements brief accounts of stunts from past years:

We will take stunt ideas from now on at Studass - they must be registered! Oldies include chickens and rams in the library, a Mall along Kelburn parade, re-direction of pedestrian traffic along Willis St and the "oldie but goodie" of food coloring in Victoria House's water supply. Start thinking about stunts now! Substantial prize offered! Judging in the Quad, noon on Friday.
(Capping Week Program, Salient, April 26, 1983:5)

Salient and the city dailies not only ran stories on each year's stunts (which was one way that students found out about stunts in which they were not personally involved); they also sometimes published retrospective articles, such as the series on "Famous student capping hoaxes retold by those involved" that Salient published in 1966 (April 15, and April 29 1966:2).

From the point of view of capping organizers, the publication of stunt stories encouraged new stunts. They also communicated for freshman students the paradigmatic form of what a stunt should be and provided a model to emulate. The stories help continue the tradition of playing practical jokes by passing on the structure and rules of the genre in narrative form (Bauman 1986:52; Degh and Vazsonyi 1983). Thus each year students were expected to draw inspiration from earlier stunts, but they were also expected to come up with ideas that were original while staying within the definition of an acceptable capping stunt.

I can recount one example of the process that students went through as they planned a stunt. During my research in the weeks before capping in 1988, I was

approached by the President of the Weir House Residents' Association, who had kindly given me access to the Association's files. He told me that some Weir residents were trying to think of a stunt for this year's capping, and asked if I had come across any good ones from the past while going through the files. In the end they conceived and carried out a stunt without any direct input from me, but they did look for ideas from previous years:

After having you come in here and go on about capping, gave me the idea that maybe we should do a stunt. We were mulling over it. I was thinking about doing one, along with some other guys, and we were going through previous years to get an idea of a decent stunt that wasn't too involved. Then Bronwyn came up to me and said that she had the perfect stunt planned, and from there it just grew.
(Craig Rattray W 5-3-88-2)

Stunt stories and legends, like other folk narratives, do not spread evenly throughout the population. There is reason to believe that stunt stories and legends are confined for the most part to a specific conduit (Degh and Vazsonyi 1975; Fine 1980) that is made up of students, some academic staff, and in some cases the families of students. Although members of the community presumably also tell stories about capping stunts, I collected no such accounts from non-students. Even the graduates who told me about stunts always told stories from the hoaxers', that is the students', point of view, and never from the perspective of the target.

The student conduit for stunt stories means that students tell their peers - other students - about stunts that they know about. The ex-students that I interviewed usually did not know about stunts that took place after they had left the university - the exception being those who returned to join the academic staff. Graduates either

did not hear about, or did not care enough to remember, stunts that took place after they had left the university and were being performed by younger generations of students.

The urine specimens stories provide an example of this student conduit. All but two of the people who told me variants of the urine specimen story had been at Victoria during or since the year in which the stunt was carried out (1976). Gordon Tait (number 8) is an exception; he was at Victoria from 1970 to 1973, three years before the stunt was performed in Wellington. Although he may be referring to an earlier enactment of the stunt, it is most likely that he heard about the 1976 stunt, after he had already left university. Since he was exceptionally interested in practical jokes of all kinds, this may explain why he would be interested in a student stunt that occurred when he was no longer a student.

The Massey University version of this stunt that took place in the 1960s was recounted by someone who was directly involved this stunt (number 14). Variant 15, which I learned from someone who was a student at Victoria University, not Massey, from 1966-1971, illustrates how the student conduit for stunt stories extended to university campuses throughout the country. The Massey stunt, communicated to students in Wellington by means of narrative, may have been the prototype of the Victoria version ten years later.

Tony Rimmer, a graduate of Massey University in Palmerston North, recalls that students at Massey admired the stunts that the Victoria students came up with (B 7-18-87-2). Moreover, the activities of organizations like the New Zealand

University Students' Association (NZUSA), which had international contacts, extended the chain of transmission overseas:

I was involved in the NZUSA, so I was hearing about stunts from all over. There was a fair amount of spreading of stunts from place to place, and a lot of word of mouth talk about stunts that we'd heard from all over. Monash university in Melbourne was a particularly strong stunting university. We got to hear a lot about things that went on there, and that gave ideas.
(Margaret Stewart, W 4-12-88-2 p1)

In the transmission of stunt stories, the only alternatives to the student conduit are people who have been on the receiving end of stunts, and transmission within families:

I've got one of those [i.e. a bogus official letter] somewhere. It was giving instructions on how you had to house the immigrant student. It was only several years ago.
- I can remember staying with a friend in Hamilton who had a son at university, and the son coming home and delightedly telling us about some stunt that they'd played, pretending to be doctors, or something that they weren't. And putting notices in people's boxes.
(Recorded at Cecily Hammond Group Meeting, W 3-30-88 145)

Where several siblings or generations of the same family have all attended university, stunt stories may be transmitted from the older generation to the younger, as well as vice-versa:

I have an older brother and sister at Otago and at Massey. My younger brother and sister are at Auckland. From them you hear the stories. Stunts were always very strong in Palmerston North. A lot of them were very visible, and very, very, funny. My mother and father used to be students; that was their type of humor; if one of their friends came up it used to be discussed at the dinner table: - wasn't that fun that time!
(Paul Horan, W 4-19-88 446).

This statement shows another means by which the student-to-student conduit encompassed all the universities in New Zealand.

The urine specimens hoax and the oral tradition surrounding it exemplify the place that capping stunts occupy in New Zealand student culture. The stunts and the stories about them form a mutually supporting, symbiotic relationship. Both the stunts and the stories are narratives; some communicated by means of verbal signs, others directly by ostensive action; the two varieties feed upon and contribute to each other (Degh and Vazsonyi 1983).

The question that arises is, what is the attraction of capping stunts to students? Why do students, especially those who have not been directly involved in stunts, talk about them so much, and why do they continue to do so after they have left the university and the student life behind? The following pages will attempt to answer these questions by offering an interpretation of the stunt stories.

The first point to note is that the narratives are told not only by and to students, but also about students. The protagonists are not named or given any individual identification; they are merely students. In some stories the student perpetrator disappears entirely behind the passive voice: "there was a circular distributed" (3); "Kelburn houses were given a very official-looking letter" (1). Other stories refer to their protagonists only with an impersonal "they" or "you." By these means the hoaxers are relegated to a backstage position in the stunts, the very same position that they occupied in the original action. Because the stunt perpetrators are identified only as generic students, the other students who tell and listen to the stories

can the more easily identify with them. The stunt stories are in a sense about themselves.

The other group named in the stories is also an impersonal one. As I have described, the targets of stunts (and antagonists in stunt stories) are either commuters - people travelling to work, or residents in suburban areas - people who own their own homes; literally, "householders." Together these groups, which significantly overlap, comprise the "other" in opposition and contrast to which students identify themselves. The defining characteristics of the target group - property and regular work - are precisely those that most students lack. Stunts and stunt stories are not only about students but also about what students are not.

The evaluative comments embedded in the stunt stories highlight the salient features that lead us to an interpretation. The 1977 capping controller provides a succinct definition of what students looked for in a stunt. "What is important in a good capping stunt," he said, "is maximum publicity, and maximum public misdirection and confusion" (Capping Program, Salient, April 26, 1977:24). Student stunt stories emphasize the disruption caused and the large numbers of people involved, both victims and others who become involved as secondary targets. The cracked reservoir hoax (number 3) produced "117 calls" to the fire brigade; in the wake of the subsoil sampling machine stunt, "the lines ran hot for three days" (number 2); and so on.

The phrases describing the effects of successful stunts often suggest that the large numbers of victims who acted on the hoaxes caused significant problems for the

public service offices that became embroiled in them. Thus Salient reported that in the aftermath of the cat registration stunt "The Karori Post Office was inundated with phone calls and had over 100 people dutifully turn up" ("Capping," Salient, May 15, 1978:13). The effects of the 1976 urine specimens stunt are described in similar terms: "the hospital was inundated with all these samples, that they perhaps didn't really desire or know what to do with" (number 8; see also the inundation motif in texts 9 and 11). The implication is that the hospitals and post offices were so deluged with citizens coming in on these fool's errands that normal business was disrupted. A similar message is found in accounts of stunts that involved traffic and public transport. Gordon Stewart's account of the free bus ride stunt (number 1) recounts in detail the confusion experienced by passengers and bus drivers and the undermining of the city council's promotion scheme; overall, he said, "It was a debacle; everything came to a standstill."

Another important evaluative comment made in stunt stories refers to the emotional responses of the public, both targets and others who were not directly touched by the stunts. One story ends with the comment, "That was good, because people were really upset over that one....people went berserk" (number 5). The effect of the bogus airport stunt was described in similar terms: "People were outraged" (number 4). The urine specimens stunt is described as provoking "the usual outrage" (number 3). The context in which these comments were made suggests that this kind of upset and outraged response was desirable, and a sign that stunts were a success.

To understand why outraged victims indicate successful stunts it is necessary to know what the outrage is a symptom of. People who "go berserk" have lost control of their emotions, which is often an accompaniment to losing control of the situation. The student hoaxers, on the other hand, are depicted as being in control. They are shown making a significant, if temporary, impact on the lives of their targets, controlling the victims' access to knowledge of what is going on (Goffman 1974), and manipulating their responses.

In a study of adolescent pranksters in Bloomington, Indiana, James Leary argues that their impersonal pranks against middle class adult males bring about a temporary reversal of power relationship between pranksters and their victims: "They made victims experience, in brief yet powerful fashion, certain unpleasant emotions to which status-wielding adults regularly subjected them: confusion, fear, anger, embarrassment, and frustration" (Leary 1979:62). There are parallels between these adolescent pranks and capping stunts. In both cases the jokers are adolescents, and the targets are successful property-owning adults. Leary emphasizes that the Bloomington pranksters targeted unknown householders rather than specific people (1979:61), and capping stunts are similarly impersonal. Like adolescents anywhere, university students are in a relatively powerless position. Although they are no longer children, they have not yet achieved full adult status, nor the trappings of adulthood, such as a permanent job or a house. By entering university students enter an extended marginal status that lies between childhood and adulthood. Although many students live away from the parental home and most consider themselves

independent, they are supported by part-time low-paying jobs and meager government bursaries - an extension of parental support - and are subject to the authority of the university. Like the adolescent pranks, capping stunts enable relatively powerless adolescents to achieve temporary power over adults, effecting a reversal of the normal situation.

Before pushing this analogy too far, we should remember that New Zealand university students are in a far more privileged position than the working-class protagonists of Leary's study, "young, poor, unskilled, disenfranchised, lacking respect from the world around them" (1979:60). University students, in contrast, receive at least some respect and are by no means unskilled. Above all, they are not likely to enter the working class. These features are reflected in their capping stunts, and distinguish them from the Bloomington pranks. While the former involved direct attacks on the targets' property or person, capping stunts rely on indirect methods, particularly the impersonation of authority and the display of skill.

A recurring theme in the evaluative comments in student stunt narratives is skill and cleverness of the student protagonists. Narrators point to the care that was taken to make the fabrications look authentic, and the organizational ability needed to handle hoaxes of this size: "this was all done on the right paper you understand, it was written on Health Department paper and typed up neatly - and it takes a bit of organizing to get people to distribute about five thousand of these" (number 5). More specifically, the stunts employ some of the specialized knowledge and skills that students acquire at university, such as the quasi-legal language in the cat registration

letter (see p.1), and the formal language and 'scientific' graph used in the urine specimens flier (figure 1). The cleverness of the students is contrasted in the stories to the gullibility of the non-student targets. It is common for practical jokers to argue that the fabrication was transparent, and that the victims have only themselves to blame for believing it. Similarly, the stunt fabrications are described in such terms as "one of the most bizarre things possible" (number 4) and "obviously ludicrous" (Gordon Tait W 3-16-88 165). On the other hand, the skill of the hoaxers overcomes the absurdity, "because it was so cleverly presented - as usual, students were ingenious in getting hold of official letterhead paper - they were quite good at doing a bogus letter" (number 4). However the stunt vehicles themselves often contained built-in discrediting clues (see figures 3, 4, 5). The student attitude is summed up in the headline of a stunt story published in the magazine of a university hall of residence: "Some people will believe anything."

In addition to being displays of skill, capping stunts used the specific device of impersonating authority. Students obtained temporary power over householders by impersonating even more powerful figures from among the officers of the law, the state, and national and local government, to whose authority other adults are subject. Although they only wield power temporarily during their stunts, this bogus authority actually adumbrates students' future roles in society. In impersonating the government bodies who run things, students are also play-acting the social role that they themselves might assume in their later careers. With the advantages of a higher education, in a country where a relatively small percentage of the population achieves

any tertiary qualifications, university graduates can expect to fill leading positions in society.

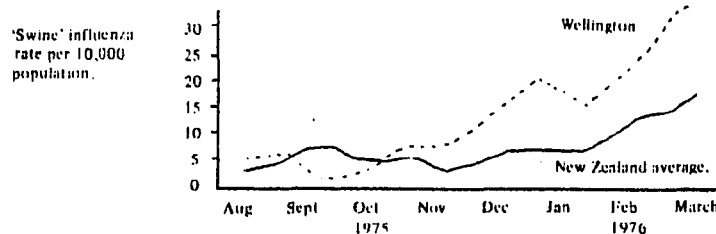
The display of specialized skills and the playful impersonation of authority distinguish capping stunts from other adolescent pranks. These features point to the class dimension of students' social position, in addition to the generational status that they share with other adolescents. In the words of one capping controller, capping stunts are "one of the few occasions in the time you spend at this University that you can participate in a direct informal way in the true spirit of a student" (Salient, 1970).

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wellington Office,
Education House,
178 - 182 Willis Street,
Ph 858 769.

Dear Householder,

Of much concern to the Department of Health over the past six months has been the abnormally high rate of 'swine' influenza in the city of Wellington. The reported incidence of 'swine' influenza in Wellington at present is estimated to be more than twice the rate for that of the rest of New Zealand. The graph below amply illustrates this:



The Department of Health, therefore, in conjunction with the Wellington Hospital Board and the National Health Institute, is conducting a series of random surveys to calculate more accurately the incidence of 'swine' influenza in Wellington. The success of this survey will, however, depend entirely on the degree of public participation.

You, and each member of your family over the age of five years, are asked to take separate urine specimens on the morning of **Wed. 28 APR 11**. Each urine specimen should be placed in a clean, preferably sterile, bottle. On each bottle a label bearing the person's name, age and sex should be attached.

Each sample should then be taken that same morning to one of the following centres:

Reception desk, Wellington Hospital, Riddiford Street.
Enquiries desk, National Health Institute, 52-62 Riddiford Street.
Wellington Hospital Board, Dalmeir House, 114 The Terrace.
District Health Office, Education House, Willis Street.

OR The postal counter of your nearest Post Office.

If you have difficulty in delivering your urine specimen please contact the Wellington Medical Research Foundation by telephoning 859 844 during normal business hours, or 726 857 before 9.00 am.

Thank you for your cooperation.

K.B. Fraser,
Assistant Regional Director,
Department of Health.

Figure 1 The letter that set in motion the infamous urine specimens stunt of 1976.

RADIO WINDY

CD / CFS / 74

Promotions Department.

Dear Listener,

As part of Radio Windy's conservation programme, selected households have been chosen to receive free passage on public transport today Tuesday 30th April.

This letter entitles you to one free journey on one of the following six Hutt Valley-Wellington suburban trains:

Upper Hutt	departing 7.07 am	arriving Wellington	7.56
"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"
Taita	"	"	"
"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"
Melling	"	"	"
"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"

Dr. Brian Edwards will be hosting a talkback session on public transport with Sir Basil Arthur this morning. Please ring and tell him your ideas on this project and public transport in general.

"Communication is the beginning of understanding"

Yours sincerely,

Juno Robinson

Juno Robinson (Ms)

Promotions Department.

Mr. Guard: please keep this form for accounting purposes.

blowing your way

Figure 2 One of two fliers used to perpetrate the free bus and train rides stunt in 1974. A similar flier offered free rides on city buses.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

Amendments to Pensioner Fares Bylaw.

Notice is hereby given that at a meeting held on the 14th day of April 1981, the Wellington City Council Transport Committee passed a special order to amend a Transport Fares Bylaw.

The Proposed Amendment is:

1. Bylaw 37. S.19 Pension Fares.

b) i. All passengers over the age of 14 years must furnish full fares on W.C.C. Transport.

b)ii. Effective 31st day of May 1981.

The Public and interested parties should note that for the purposes of the amendment Pensioners will no longer be entitled to special fares. The above amendment was deemed to be necessary because of the W.C.C. worsening state of finances and large recent capital outlay.

Public Submissions may be lodged at the Office of the Council Mercer Street, Wellington, or addressed to:

Pensioner Fares Amendments.
Town Clerk,
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington.

Submissions close on the first day of May 1981.

I.A. McCLUTSHEON

Town Clerk.

Figure 3 This notice, bearing the logo of the Wellington City Transport Department, was posted throughout the city in 1981. The Town Clerk's real name was McCutcheon.

(1979)



60/1616/3 *File*

WELLINGTON CITY CORPORATION

PIGEON CONTROL

CAUTION !

NOTICE IS HEREBY
GIVEN THAT:

ON THE 28th APRIL

**1080 POISON
WILL BE LAID IN
THIS VICINITY**

TOWN CLERK
I. McCutcheon.

Figure 4 This notice was posted in city streets and parks in 1979. Again, it contains a pun on the name of the Town Clerk, Mr. McCutcheon.

THE DOMINION

TUESDAY

MAY 3

GOVT. DECIDES...

10 P.M. CLOSING
STARTS
TONIGHT

Figure 5 This fake poster was placed beside the boxes of The Dominion newspaper in 1966. Note the pun on the paper's name. At the time, New Zealand bars closed at 6 p.m. daily.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF CAPPING OR WHY POLITICALLY CORRECT PEOPLE CAN'T LAUGH

Folklorists in the past have been accused of taking too much interest in vanishing or vanished ways of life, in "memory culture" instead of living culture. In choosing capping celebrations as a research topic, I thought I would avoid that trap, since as I remembered from my undergraduate days at Victoria University in the late 1970s capping was a lively custom still celebrated with gusto. I remembered attending capping revues, going to the dances, making plans with friends for capping stunts that we never carried out, laughing over others that did take place, and watching, from a distance, the pub crawls and drinking horns. There seemed to be plenty of life to capping, and I looked forward to experiencing it again as a participant-observer when I returned to Victoria in 1988.

Even before I arrived in Wellington to do my field research, however, I heard disquieting news. I wrote to the university accommodation office to inquire about a place to stay in the city, and in her reply the accommodation officer said as an aside

that "Capping Week celebrations are very different from those of a few years ago-- they are much quieter now!" Worse was to come from the people I talked to around the university after my arrival. "Capping's dead, isn't it?" asked one faculty member. Others told me that I should have gone to the universities of Otago or Canterbury, where capping was still a part of student life. "All the hoo-ha's been too long ago here for anyone to really remember it very well," said a university clerical worker at the beginning of our interview. These and similar comments made me wonder if I had made the right choice of topic, or selected the right research site.

With time I found out that, while capping was not entirely dead at Victoria, it was very much changed from what it had been when I was a student there in the late 1970s, and even more changed from its earlier days. In addition, in 1988 students were involved in an effort to revive the capping of old, an effort in which I could not avoid becoming involved. This chapter describes the changes in capping, discusses the possible reasons for these changes. The next chapter will relate what happened during the 1988 revival.

Several writers have noted similar declines in student culture since the early 1970s. Helen Horowitz (1987) ended her history of American campus culture with a disappointed assessment of the contemporary scene and blamed this decline on the conservatism of today's students, who are more interested in improving their grades than in enjoying the full educational experience that extracurricular culture offers. Michael Moffatt (1989) suggested that Horowitz's explanation for the change was premature, arguing instead that student culture is now to be found in the private

sphere and is therefore invisible to the outside observer, including the university professor who shares the same campus. Moffatt posed as an undergraduate at Rutgers for a brief period, and spent another extended period living in an undergraduate residence hall, where he was able to observe this private culture. He suggested that this retreat to the private sphere was a reaction against the increasing regulation of the traditional extracurriculum by college administrators. With respect to capping, there has been no noticeable increase in the extent to which university authorities meddle in student life outside the classroom.

The fate of capping at Victoria University, and also at other universities in New Zealand, fits the same pattern observed in the United States and in Europe, and offers an opportunity to investigate the precise reasons for the decline public campus culture, if decline is the right word to describe what has happened to student life in the last twenty years. Keith Sinclair noted this trend in capping in his history of the University of Auckland, where students abandoned their capping procession in 1971. The principal reason for this decision, he argues, was that students had lost interest in the traditional horse-play and lavatory humor. "This point deserves some emphasis," he said, "for the attitudes of the young were in a phase of rapid change" (1983:260). It has become the standard interpretation to blame the decline of old-time student life and custom on "the 60's" (e.g. Bronner 1990). While it is a fact that the late 1960s and early 70s mark the end of many student customs, the exact mechanism that operated during that watershed period has not been clearly identified.

This chapter will describe the transformation of capping in the 1970s and 80s, during which period the tradition was altered from a public, exoteric series of events into a smaller, more introverted one. I will briefly consider the most popular theory as to the cause for this change, an explanation that I find unsatisfactory. The rest of the chapter will examine how student attitudes toward capping changed, and how the meaning of the traditional capping shifted for many students with the result that they could no longer support it. I argue that these changes in attitude and meaning are confined neither to New Zealand nor to young people, but are widespread and influential motives today in western industrial society generally. The change in capping is a characteristic example of the fate of humorous public events in postmodern societies, a change that I call the death of humor.

The Disorganization of Capping

A clear sign of the decline of capping can be seen in the reports of the capping controllers, the students appointed each year to oversee the organization of the event. Until the 1960s capping organizers appear uniformly enthusiastic about their task, knowledgeable about what was expected of them, and supported by the rest of the student leadership. By the 1980s, their annual reports show them to be unprepared for the job, beset by financial and practical obstacles, and feeling that a good part of the student leadership was opposed to their efforts. Sometimes the capping controllers themselves are encumbered with serious doubts as to the validity of capping.

Like any other large-scale public event, capping required a lot of organization and planning. This work was done by the Executive of the Students' Association and a crew of other appointed and volunteer organizers. All students are automatically members of and pay a mandatory dues to the Students' Association. In return the Association distributes funds to the individual student clubs, runs the student newspaper and other publications, arranges sporting and cultural events for students, and represents students to both the university and the government in matters concerning their education and welfare. Much of this work is performed by the Association Executive, which includes the student president, secretary, treasurer, and other officers, all of whom are students elected by general student vote. The Executive has the power to appoint such people as the editor of Salient, the editor of the capping magazine, and the capping controller.

At the height of capping, a sizable bureaucracy had grown up consisting of committees and subcommittees dedicated to running the different parts of the festival. In 1944, for example, eleven people were listed as being responsible for the different aspects of organizing the Extravaganza show alone. The rest of capping was run by a graduate ceremony controller, an undergrad. supper controller, treasurer, business manager, financial controller, and Cappicade editor. In 1966 capping was organized by a 14-member committee under the chair of the capping controller. The following year the committee numbered 13, including two who had served in the previous year. This information is obtained from the annual reports of the capping controllers. The reports that date from the 1980s however show a very different picture. By this time

there were only one or two capping controllers who had to arrange the whole of capping. In some years it was difficult even to find someone to fill the position. Thus in 1980 a controller was not appointed until four weeks before capping, only to resign two weeks later. Another Executive officer, aided by a capping social committee, had to take over the job one week before capping was supposed to begin.

In his first year at university, Spiro Anastasiou was appointed capping controller in 1978. In an interview, he reveals the pressure that was put on him as being virtually the sole person responsible for producing this large-scale event. He began the interview by saying, "I never completed my degree. Capping was one of the reasons."

I had absolutely no appreciation of what was involved; it was my first experience of organizing anything on that scale. Like so many collective activities, everyone was full of good intentions and promising to do things; everything started collapsing around your ears and you ended up doing most of it, and browbeating and armbending to get some help on some of the things. It took up most of my time and basically ruined my first term; that was one of the major factors why I decided not to finish with my studies that year. I withdrew before I started failing things (W-2-29-88-2).

Although he had to do a lot of the work himself, Spiro was told what he had to do, and what events should be arranged. "I was told that I had a budget. There were the standard events like the capping ball that had to be organized. The annual raft race, the drinking horn, a hop to start capping, the ball ended it; coordinating and approving stunts." In contrast, the four capping controllers in 1983 reported that they

were given no idea as to what to do. "Having dug through hundreds of files, minutes, and reports, we were unable to discover any indications of what to do for capping," they said in their report. "We were faced with no guidelines, no experience and little time to acquire either." Accordingly, capping lost money in 1983. As a result of this ordeal, the controllers felt that capping should be scaled down from a week to two or three days in length. "Because of pressures of in-term assessment, low bursaries and a certain amount of student apathy, it is not recommended that capping continue in its present form."

Clearly, capping was in trouble in the 1980s. In the previous decade both procesh and Cappicade had been abolished. The capping show, with a cast of over a hundred, used to fill the Opera House downtown for ten nights and realize a substantial profit of up to 1,800 pounds (according to Salient, February 25, 1963:5). In 1986 the small cast outnumbered the crowd during their lunchtime performances on campus; the show was held in the lobby of the theater because the audiences were so small. Once, hundreds had attended the Capping Ball; in 1981 the ball was cancelled the week before capping because only two tickets had been sold.

An Introverted Tradition

Although the above gives the impression that capping all but died in the 1980s, and although the comments of some students and staff suggest the same, the tradition never died out completely. Instead, it became introverted. The most public elements of the old capping, the exoteric displays that students had aimed outside their own

group, towards the members of the "Town," were replaced with esoteric events that took place on campus instead of in the streets, and involved only students. The audiences, topics, and targets of capping were no longer taken from the public but from within the student body. These developments will be examined with respect to capping stunts, the growth of on-campus entertainment directed at student audiences, the short history of the Capping Band, and the proliferation of drinking events.

Capping stunts continued to be a major part of capping during this period of change and retrenchment. However, two changes occurred: some stunts were pressed into service as political statements, and others became introverted. Especially in the politically active period of the 1970s, some stunts had an overt message of social criticism and political statement. For example, students hung a Nazi flag from the city building that housed the national Secret Service while on the street outside a group of students gave the Nazi salute. The city newspaper quoted a student as saying that the purpose of the stunt was to draw attention to the Secret Service and embarrass them (Dominion, May 8, 1969:3). In 1980, the hated Minister of Education unwisely chose Capping Week to visit the Victoria campus for an address to the Association of University teachers. Since he held the Education portfolio in a time when the government was cutting back spending on higher education, he was the target of protests by the national and local student associations. The student Executive arranged a capping stunt in which students packed the quad which the minister had to traverse after his meeting, blocking his path until he agreed to accept a petition from the student president.

This direct action is indistinguishable from the tactics used in political demonstrations throughout the period; what was unusual was that it was billed as a capping stunt. While stunts had often contained an element of social criticism, in this period the message was much more overt. This exploitation of stunts for serious purposes further undermined the play frame that had traditionally protected them and the rest of capping.

The second change that took place in capping stunts was that growing numbers of them took place on campus, and targeted fellow students and university institutions and procedures. In other words, capping stunts became increasingly introverted. For example, in capping week in 1985 students plotted a hoax lecture on campus. During disputes over a proposed national rugby tour to South Africa, which Student Association policy opposed, it was announced that the head of the Rugby Union, which was supporting the tour, would be giving a talk on campus. The hall was packed with students when the fabricators arrived: "It was packed out. We cracked up; we couldn't believe how stupid--gullible--all these people were to think that in the middle of quite a heavy protest concerning the proposed tour, to think that [Rugby Union head] Ces Blazey would actually turn up and talk to a bunch of students that the Friday before had been in the march [against the tour]. We just cracked up and laughed, and the Overseas Officer got up and said, 'You've been had. But while you're here, there's going to be another protest march on Friday.' There must have been at least a thousand students packed in there" (W 5-4-88).

Some stunts targeted individuals in the student association hierarchy. In 1983, for example, Weir House students kidnapped the student president and a friend as a capping stunt. His legs and chest were shaven and his hair died purple. The student radio station broadcast hourly descriptions of the kidnappers' progress (Weir House Magazine, Jubilee Magazine, 1933-1983:67-68). In 1988 Weir inmates also kidnapped the student president, and this was the prize-winning stunt of the year.

Spoof articles in Salient have appeared occasionally since 1980. Since Salient is not distributed off campus, the targets of these hoaxes are fellow students. The first of these spoofs was a story that uncovered the secret correspondence revealing that a new building on campus, the Von Zedlitz Tower, was structurally unsound. Another popular stunt in 70s and 80s capping is the climbing of campus buildings, which is a specialty of the Tramping Club. A small inconspicuous brass plaque was mounted in a flowerbed beside the library, looking for all the world like an official plaque announcing that the plot was created in memory of an alumnus. Upon looking closely, one can make out the inscription: "THIS UNIVERSITY SUCKS" (figure 1). According to the student president, this was placed as a capping stunt.

A further sign of the introverted trend in capping was the growth of events located entirely on campus and directed at audiences made up solely of students. Capping programs since 1977 feature a variety of musical and literary performances that capping controllers arranged to take place in "the quad"--a courtyard in the center of the campus bounded by the library and two classroom buildings. Here musicians, poets, clowns, and similar performers entertained student crowds during their lunch

hours in Capping Week. Strikingly, many of these performers were not students themselves, but were professional or semi-professional artists hired by the capping controller. These performances constitute a reversal of the roles in the "old-time" capping, where all the active performing roles had been taken by students, and outsiders were the target audience.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s student politicians and political institutions themselves became the targets of satire during capping. The 1980 program promised a "Kangaroo Court" wherein "the Executive will be Tried and Duly Convicted for the following offenses: Flagellation; Masturbation; Mastication; Eradication; and other assorted Actions and Niceties" (Salient, April 21, 1980:7). Student Representative Councils (SRCs) began in 1970 as the body that determined student association policy. All students are automatic members of the Association and can speak and vote at SRCs, which are held every week during the academic year. Sometimes the SRC scheduled during capping week was run as usual, but on other occasions it was run as a parody:

To the uninitiated this can be a frightening experience. Heavens and earths move, right feet are raised, poems jokes and limericks are recited and women of the female sex are forbidden to speak....Also one had to say "Merv" (yuk) or "Library, Staff Club" to vote. ("Capping SRC Report, Salient, May 5, 1980:4).

The yukky "Merv." that this joke alluded to was the then Minister of Education, Mervyn Wellington. On the same theme, also in 1980, the Students' Association organized a capping stunt in which "Mervs" (actually gumboots, or "Wellingtons")

were placed prominently on city landmarks, in another unflattering reference to the Minister.

Roberts' Rules of Order were frequently targeted during the capping SRC. For example, one does not move a motion but instead moves a Heaven and Earth. The agenda itself contains motions like the following: that only men be permitted to vote; that the Student President do lie upon the table (a reference to the procedure of tabling material); that the Chairperson do leave the room for the duration of the meeting; and that one shall signify "Aye" by hopping on one foot.

The Capping SRCs continue the trend toward esoteric performance in capping since the 1970s. Although the performers are students, the audiences are entirely made up of students as well. The targets of the humor and satire in the Capping SRC are also internal. Student politicians and the student political process itself is parodied in this event.

The Capping Band was a later and relatively short-lived development of the 1980s. It first appears under the name of "The Capping Band" in 1981 (Salient, May 4, 1981:2). It can be likened to an esoteric, small-scale Procesh. It was an ad hoc assembly of male students in costumes of various sorts. Each morning during Capping Week they processed around campus and burst into lectures, singing drinking songs. I talked to a graduate student in geology who had been in the band for several years as an undergraduate:

I was in the capping band. '85 was a good year, and '86 was the big demise of it. Fell apart, because some students didn't appreciate their lectures getting busted into for ten minutes. All the capping band really was, was a bunch of rowdy students bursting into lectures and

advertising capping events. In various disguises ranging from rabbit ears to masks to hats, coats. It wasn't really radical. Just boozy (W-5-4-88:1).

The band sang songs and carried with them a keg of beer mounted on a chair. As they consumed the beer en route their performance became more boisterous and disorganized. They did not have prior permission to burst into on-going lectures as they did, and their entrances were sometimes welcomed, sometimes merely tolerated:

We didn't officially have approval to do this even though it was pretty much accepted as a bit of a joke. It tended to get a bit of a laugh from the lecturers. They usually recognized a couple of voices in the band; "I know who that fool is; I'll get them." Generally you crashed into lectures you had either been in or someone else had been in; here's my chance to get even, type of thing (W-5-4-88:237).

The progress of the capping band, with its combination of costuming, rowdy behavior by a young all-male group, the disguising and attempts to guess the identity of the maskers, is analogous to other traditional house visit customs such as Halloween trick-or-treating, Christmas belsnickling (Bauman 1972), and mumming (Glassie 1975).

The targets of the band were the university system and specific lecturers, which marks a distinct shift in emphasis from its predecessors, process and the earlier capping stunts. Instead of targeting the public, the band harassed fellow students and lecturers. The reference to "getting even" with your lecturers points to the temporary ludic challenge created by the band's performance as they briefly abrogated the lecturer's control and authority over the class.

In the relatively brief span of this tradition the capping band achieved a high profile on campus as the harbingers of capping and the most prominent representatives of festive license, particularly as regards drinking. In addition to their perambulations through classes, capping programs list them as entertaining students in the quad, hosting the champagne breakfasts, and leading the way during pub crawls.

However this remnant of the old time capping spirit did not enjoy unqualified support of their fellow students, as the remark quoted above suggests. The following inspired piece of doggerel appeared alongside the 1983 capping program in Salient, and reflects an ambivalent response to the group:

Sing tirralo, sing tirralay,
The Capping Band lives far away,
It eats umbrellas, rotting sacks,
Brass doorknobs, mud, and carpet tacks.
How most unpleasing, to be sure!
Its other habits are obscure.

Sing jigglepin, sing jogglepen,
The Capping band has left its den.
We pass our happy childhood hours
In weaving endless chains of flowers.
Across the hills the Capping band

Is hurtling on, Kerbash, kerblam!

Sing twiddle-ear, sing twaddle or,

The Capping band is at the door.

It's making an unholy fuss,

Why has it come to visit us?

What nasty, bloodshot little eyes

For anything of such a size.

How weakly does the teacher smile

The Capping band is in the aisle.

So silly are these little chaps

I wish they'd learn to shut their traps

Sing dinglegling, sing dingleglunt.

The Capping Band are out in front.

(Salient, April 26, 1983:4)

This piece, presumably written by a student, delights in word play and in parody of academic language both literary/poetic ("Sing tirralo, sing tirralay") and scientific ("Its other habits are obscure.") The poem satirizes the capping band, from the

perspective of the ordinary student, compared to whom the band are a strange body, and none too aesthetically pleasing ("What nasty, bloodshot little eyes"). Another stanza alludes to the band's beer drinking, which is also contrasted with the habits of the ordinary student ("On wholesome bowls we are all fed/The Capping band drinks jugs instead"); i.e. we, the ordinary students drink something like milk; they drink beer. The band is finally dismissed as "silly," noisy, and disruptive "So silly are these little chaps/ I wish they'd learn to shut their traps"; "And all they really said was trash."

Some of the students whose lectures were disrupted by the capping band had a less ambivalently negative response. An incident with fellow students in 1986 spelled the end of this short-lived capping custom. A fight broke out between some students in the class and capping band members after someone in the band had removed from the table a pair of glasses belonging to a student. The lecturer then threw the band out. An official complaint was made to the university authorities, with the result that the capping band was formally prohibited.

This incident elicited an editorial and a flurry of letters to Salient, some in support of the professor and the aggrieved student, and others supporting the Band. An "Ex-Capping Band member" wrote to Salient to complain, "If someone doesn't support the Capping Band, the least they can do is tolerate us once a year--just as we tolerate some of you apathetic, boring or psychotic bastards for the rest of it" (May 5, 1986:15). From the other side, the professor was quoted as saying the band had been acting "loutish and hoonish." Some of the eyewitness accounts from members of the

class are quite negative toward the band, describing them as drunk and obstructing the course of the lecture; they did not have "any intention of letting us get on with what we paid our student fees for--learning" (May 26, 1986:19). Furthermore, student critics charged that the band's show was not even amusing: "The participants have no right to assume that non-participants are enthralled by their antics" (ibid.). One witness described the class reaction when the Band asked them if they should continue: "We were asked if we wanted them to continue--our reply was totally negative--a strong silence with a few quiet 'go homes.' To this we were told that we would hear it anyway and so the facade [sic] went on and on..." (ibid.). The writer continued, "let fun stay where it belongs, outside of lecture halls....I travel 120 miles a day to attend these lectures and I don't have to travel that far just to see a bare male bum....It was not necessary for the band member to drop his tweeds nor for one to dance on the lectern" (ibid.). However despite his claim that the class attitude was "totally negative," the same writer also noted parenthetically that four members of the class had joined the Band before it was forced out of the room.

This student's comments are comparable to the reactions of the public who watched (or endured) Procesh in previous years. As a member of the class which the capping band interrupted, he was a target of their actions in the same way that the Procesh crowds also became targets. He argues that play does not belong inside the lecture theater, which suggests that in being an involuntary audience to the band's performance he was also an involuntary play partner. As in practical joking, another activity that relies on the unilateral imposition of play frames onto situations, the

response of the target is not always collusion (Bowman 1983). The arguments on both sides are similar in the capping band incident and in practical joke negotiations; one side accuses the other of introducing play inappropriately, while the other side attempts to label the former as lacking in humor (or as the "Ex-Capping Band member's" letter put it, "apathetic, boring or psychotic bastards").

This incident and the responses it generated illustrate the major changes that had taken place in capping between 1970 and 1986. Once, most students could identify with the members of the procession even though they were not in it themselves; the most substantive criticism was that it caused further deterioration in the public image of students, an attitude which still pitted students as a group against the outsiders in the town. By 1986 students were far less concerned with what the outsiders thought of them; instead they were divided amongst themselves. Instead of targeting the town in their capping license, they targeted each other. Thus the response of the students discussed above does not mean, as Helen Horowitz and others have argued, that the current generation of students have lost their capacity for fun; it is simply the result of the switch in position between jokers and targets. The shoe is on the other foot, and the student targets are reacting no differently from any other target from another group or another era.

Popular Theories for the Decline of Capping: The Internal Assessment Bogey

Since the late 70s students have been acutely aware that capping has fallen from its glory days. The 1978 student president, for example, looked back to capping

in 1970. Then, she said, "virtually the whole university took a week off to take part in a festive and exciting time. It was an opportunity for students to meet other students and to feel a part of the university. What happened this year?" (President's Column (Lindy Cassidy), Salient, May 15 1978:2). In her answer, she laid the blame on "internal assessment," which she described as having "made this place a cultural, social, political and sporting desert."

Internal assessment is still the most widely-held popular explanation for the decline of capping. It refers to the practice of scheduling assignments, tests, and other assessment procedures throughout the academic year. Until the 1970s New Zealand university students were graded solely on their performance in an intensive period of final examinations at the end of the year. Ironically, the local and national student organizations campaigned vigorously for years to replace this outmoded system with "internal assessment," which they argued was a fairer, more accurate, and pedagogically sounder approach. According to the popular historical model of this process, the introduction of internal assessment has vastly increased the workload of students, which has had a direct negative impact on their participation in extra-curricular life, turning the campus into a "social desert."

Gyles Beckford was a student from 1971 to 1977, and witnessed the change from final-exam era to internal assessment, with a corresponding change in the rhythm of student life:

Once people could afford to miss weeks upon weeks of lectures; just go to the odd tutorial and then you have a last-minute cram at the end of the year for the exam, and you spent all your other time having a good time, whether it was politics or social activities. That went. The

pressure was on. It became crucial to whether you passed or failed, and people very quickly went heads down and bums up (Beckford W-5-2-88B:033).

Staff member Stuart Johnston described the impact of internal assessment in similar terms. "The shift to internal assessment played havoc with that notion that during the last week of the first term you could cut classes, drop everything and have a ball in capping activities" (W-5-13-88-1:390). Spiro Anastasiou, who was Capping Controller in 1978, also blamed internal assessment for the decline of capping. By 1978, he said, "Gone were the days when everyone would have a hoot of a time during the year, and cram like hell at mid-year..." (W-2-29-88-2:272). The shift towards internal assessment has taken place in all the New Zealand universities, as have the changes in capping. In 1988 internal assessment was being described by student leaders as "a growing cancer" that encouraged a scramble for grades at the expense of education, defined as including both academics and "the wider experiences of varsity--including Capping" (Critic, (Otago University Students' Association newspaper), May 4, 1988:2). The Otago student president argued that capping should be a time "when we can all rest and enjoy ourselves meeting friends about to graduate." However, "what we see instead is students heads down, bums up swotting for terms tests and essays that make a large proportion of their grades covering nearly all subjects" (Ibid.).

New Zealand's tough economic times during the late 1980s is felt by many to have further hastened the fall of capping and the death of student life. Higher

unemployment has increased enrollments, leading to more competition for scarce resources in the university, including insufficient places in undergraduate courses. "Now you've got to search for a place to sit in the library," was the common complaint among undergraduates in 1988. Hard times have also made students take their education more seriously, it was argued. "People now have a more serious appreciation of why they're at university. They have to get a qualification because they need a job" (Gyles Beckford, W-5-2-88B:033).

These explanations depict the spirit of festivity on campus succumbing to the work ethic. The argument goes that students used to have the freedom to enjoy an active extracurricular life, including capping. Although classes were not cancelled during capping week, students felt free to skip lectures that clashed with capping activities. This time away from classes and study would not cost them anything in terms of their final results. With internal assessment, students argue that they are under too much academic pressure to be able to take time off for something as frivolous as capping. For them, the predominant trope describing their attitude to the student role is "heads down, burns up," or keep your nose to the grindstone.

This model of the decline of capping and the rise of internal assessment suggests that New Zealand students had been cheating at festivity in the past. Capping had not been deep play, because to skip classes and get into the celebrations had not entailed any risk. Now that the cost is higher, students are less willing to play at capping.

However, while there has undoubtedly been a change in the way university students are assessed in New Zealand, with a corresponding change in the way they approach their studies and in the annual rhythm of student life, neither internal assessment nor economic pressures offer a sufficient explanation for the changes in capping. While today's students most perform in academics consistently throughout the year, earlier generations of students had pressures of their own to cope with. Previously, most students held down full-time jobs in the city and took classes on evenings and weekends. The campus itself had few buildings, let alone the amenities available in the Union to students today. These factors would not seem to encourage a lively student life, but as Beaglehole's history (1949) and a perusal of early issues of *Spike* show, these part-time students were able to support an active extracurricular life, including capping.

Capping did not decline because students were forced by lack of time to give it up. The facts suggest that to a large extent they abandoned the old-style capping voluntarily. During the 1970s a significant portion of the student population lost interest in capping, at least as it had been celebrated in the past, because it no longer matched their self-image, ideology, or worldview. The rest of this chapter will describe who and why that change in attitude took place at Victoria, and suggest how the change is significant for an understanding of more widespread cultural developments throughout the postmodern world.

Internal Opposition To Capping

During the heyday of capping, criticism of process, inappropriate stunts, and the like was perceived as coming from the town. While students argued amongst themselves as to what form capping should take, or criticized individual incidents that cast the university in a bad light, they generally supported capping and its celebrants. From 1970 on, however, this situation changed. Increasingly, some of the strongest opposition came from the student politicians and journalists, the group that previously played a large part in organizing the festival. "Capping Week came and went," wrote the 1984 editor, summing up the week's events; "with luck much of it is buried forever" (Salient, May 21, 1984:2). A 1983 editorial in Salient attacks behavior during capping:

Well, that was capping week. It was good to see all those people getting involved. Pissing into jugs and on screens at the Beer Fest in the Union hall, last Thursday night. Abusing people on the march protesting unemployment last Friday lunchtime. Acting just like "real" students should. Irresponsible. Stupid. Drunk. What a **great image**. What a **fun** thing to do (May 2, 1983:2).

This criticism continues one of the perennial themes of capping criticisms, namely that it promotes a poor image of students. The difference is that now the criticism concerns the way that capping activities undermine, either directly or indirectly, the efforts of other student groups; in this case the demonstration protesting unemployment. This comment refers to the existence of deep divisions within the student body that had not existed to the same extent before, or at least had not been as visible.

Another sign of the unsympathetic attitude toward capping was the disappearance of capping from the pages of Salient. Formerly there had been stories that reported on the progress of preparations and the rehearsals for the capping show; exhorted freshmen to get involved, and critiqued the events in the weeks following capping. Now there might be a single photograph of Procesh with a caption but no story; or perhaps a column that reported on capping events. The stories that did appear began to condemn capping in the strongest terms, as immature, reactionary, and unworthy of students. Some capping controllers complained that they had to fight to get space in Salient to publicize events; "it seems the whole idea of capping week was directly contrary to editorial policy," commented the 1983 controllers in their report.

Capping was almost abolished altogether in 1974. A motion was introduced to the SRC to reallocate the funds budgeted for capping. Speaking in support of the motion, Executive members said that no-one had shown any interest in running capping. That statement prompted some supporters of capping to form a committee on the spot to do the job, and the capping budget was approved Salient, April 17, 1974:5). Significantly, the Executive themselves were not interested in organizing the festival. This incident suggests that in fact the decline of support for capping was in fact widespread amongst the students.

Specific motivations for this condemnation of the traditional capping arose from the Marxist and feminist orientations of many of the student leadership. By the early 1970s the Executive of the Students' Association was dominated by radical left-

wing students of a Maoist stripe. The majority of the student population was apolitical if not conservative, although a growing number espoused a variety of liberal and left-wing causes without being as radical as their leadership. These groupings became polarized over capping among other contentious issues. My use of labels such as "radical" "feminist," or "conservative/reactionary" students is not a fine-grained portrayal of the political and social groupings on campus at the time; they are conveniences for the sake of being able to talk about what went on.

Some supporters of the old-time capping would claim that the tradition was killed off, or at least left to die from neglect, by a minority of politically active left-wing student leaders for whom capping did not agree with their ideological views. They argue that this minority was able to impose its will on the majority of students because they had control of Student Representative Councils and Association resources. Gyles Beckford was an Executive member from 1973 to 1976, and President in 1976. According to him, in the 1970s the left-wing "student politicians" achieved near-hegemony on the Victoria campus because students of opposing political views were less active and less organized. "Politics had become the prevailing drive of active people on campus," he said. "The rest of it drifted away into a certain apathy, non-activity, because there wasn't a driving force of an alternative viewpoint" (W-4-2-88:201). Therefore, the active minority was able to exert a disproportionate influence on Association policy:

The politicians were somewhat intolerant of dissent to their views. It was easy to push through all sorts of progressive policies. It invited a backlash; but there was never any organized center around which that could coalesce. Another reason for capping's demise was there was no

alternate power structure on campus once the broad left was in control. The Exec. is the only organized structure within the [Student] Association that can look after the money and provide the resources to achieve things. Individuals pop up and disappear again; there are clubs; but none of them have the wherewithal to make things happen (W-4-2-88:545).

Once the Executive became dominated by people who were opposed to capping on political and ideological grounds, capping declined. Although there were significant groups on campus who preferred the old capping and who denied that charges made against it by the leadership, they did not have the organization necessary to produce capping themselves.

However, to lay the blame for the decline of capping solely at the feet of student politicians would overstate their influence. Although the withdrawal of the experience and support of this sector of the student body was a significant factor that confounded the efforts of capping organizers, it is not the only factor. Instead, the evidence suggests that opposition to capping, either as a whole or to some of its parts, was widespread amongst students. The evidence also indicates that students were divided, sometimes bitterly, over whether or not to support and continue capping.

The Debate over Procesh

Procesh was an early victim of the new climate of opinion among students, and its fate will illustrate the processes at work in the decline of capping generally. At an SRC meeting just before capping in 1970, a motion that the Students' Association not sponsor Procesh was heavily defeated. After the 1970 capping

Salient ran a cryptic review of procesh that year that implied it was dull, immature, and anachronistic (May 27, 1970:16). At the SRC meeting in June, Margaret Bryson the student president was reported as arguing "that Procesh was a disgrace and that both students and the public were tired of it" (Salient, June 10, 1970:3). Added arguments in favor of abolition were the bills for damages, totalling almost one thousand dollars, that the Association received after procesh in 1970. The motion to abolish procesh was passed.

Margaret recalled that the debate over the motion to abolish procesh was heated, and that "there were a lot of people very angry that it had been cancelled" (W-4-12-88-2:490). In 1971 students in favor of procesh managed to pass an SRC motion to reinstate it. Salient reported this development in terms that were strongly critical of the motivations of the procesh supporters, implying that they were narrowly interested in having fun, ignoring public opinion, and who indulged in excessive drinking and damage to property. Subsequently, a small Procesh was organized by this rebel group for 1971 with a reasonable amount of success, but this was the last year the event took place in Wellington.

Margaret felt that procesh became a political matter during this period, and that students were split over whether or not to support it depending on their political orientations. "Conservative students wanted procesh; the more left wing and liberal ones, the reds, pinks, and the pale purples, were anti-procesh," she recalled (W-4-12-88-2:160). A questionnaire published in Salient in 1970 asked students, among other things, whether Procesh should have been abolished. The results, with 1,000 returns

received, show an almost perfect split of opinion: 43% favored abolition while 47% were opposed (Salient, June 25, 1970:8).

May Day

In 1973 the attack on capping went a step further. According to a report in Salient, the Executive decided not to celebrate capping that year, finding that it was an anachronistic activity. "It divides student from student--the "Successful" who "passes" the magic number of units to get a degree is honoured while the rest grind on in the oppressive University Machine" (Salient, April 19, 1973:10). Thus capping, or graduation, was linked to the whole system of higher education, which was criticized for its reliance on competition between students. In place of capping the Association decided to celebrate May Day, the day of international working class solidarity. The proposed program included an anti-sexist meeting, a Mayday celebration, a rock concert, and a hangi/social. Instead of capping stunts, it was suggested that students perform "a 'Heroic Activity' against institutions supporting capitalism, imperialism, sexism, racism, and knowledgeism." This program was intended to display allegiance to women's rights, the Maori renaissance, and the working class:

Capping stunts in the past have been tolerated because people accepted that students were a privileged elite in society. This year the Students' Association has decided that, instead of proclaiming the status of students as elite, it will proclaim its solidarity with the workers throughout the world in their struggle against the injustices of the capitalist system. ("Celebrate May Day!" Salient, May 1, 1973:2).

Students had supported left-wing and revolutionary causes before the 1970s-- for instance the Spanish Civil War. Something profoundly different was going on in the 70s however. For the first time, radical student critiques were extended to themselves, their social status, and the role of the university and its workings in maintaining the iniquities of the capitalist system. (Horowitz and Friedland 1970:35-65). In particular, the radical critique of capping uncovered the social class position of students which had been a subtext, but a disguised one, of many capping events. This explicit naming and rejection of the class basis of higher education not only effected the capping celebrations, but also resulted in the decline in attendance at the capping ceremonies themselves in this period.

Faced with this criticism of their social position, politically conscious students found it difficult to continue supporting the traditional capping activities which had formerly been welcomed as the epitome of what it meant to be a student. For these politically conscious and self-conscious 1970s students, capping was still the epitome of their social position, but the ramifications of that social position had become much clearer and that much harder to swallow. Thus we get the following bitter and sarcastic announcement, made by the capping controller in 1975:

It's that time again. Those who have passed through what was once called an education mill, but is now known as a degree factory, receive their ticket to either high salaries in cushy government jobs...or the right to obtain another ticket for an even higher salary in a more cushy job etc, etc. For those who haven't yet "made it" capping is a good time for drunken revelry, terrorising the locals, and generally having a good time.

When even the organizers of an event feel this ambivalent about not only the celebration but also the underlying social base, it is not surprising that activities should decline.

The second arm of the 1970s deconstruction of capping had a feminist orientation. In addition to pointing out the class privilege and social inequities that underlay capping, politically conscious students began to see that the old capping events were gendered as well. An early target of this critique was the Miss Victoria beauty contest, which had been introduced into capping programs in 1966. A report on the 1971 capping week demonstrates, in unattractive fashion, the defensive response of a traditional male student to the feminist critique of the contest:

The Miss Vic Contest was well attended even if it was the Woman's Lib who were present....The forces of the Ho Chi Minge [sic] attacked the Miss Vic Contest in a well planned tit offensive. One cannot help be skeptical of their motives when a group of the biggest pigs at Varsity disrupt a contest aimed at finding the best looking chick on campus. It is like a delegation of lepers picketing the clerasil [sic] factory ("Capping Week," Salient, n.d. 1971:3).

In a reaction to these attacks on the contest, a group of students from the men's hostel, Weir House, entered one of their own in the 1970 competition. The winners were chosen by popular vote, so by stacking the meeting the Weir House mob were able to ensure that "Miss Brucella Anderson" won. The following year a motion to abolish the Miss Victoria Contest was defeated by student vote at the SRC, but they did vote to hold a Mr Victoria Contest in conjunction with it (Salient, May 6, 1970:4). Held in 1971, this event featured men in drag. "The guys dressed up and

really performed, " recalled Margaret Stewart. "They formed a nice foil to the Miss Victoria contest" (W-4-12-88-2:455). The 1971 event was the last for both Miss and Mr Victoria; the feminist student lobby succeeded in pushing a motion through the SRC to abolish the event.

Another target of feminist criticism was the heavy emphasis on beer during capping week. While drinking and associated rowdiness had always been a part of capping celebrations, especially at the balls and suppers and during procesh, the 1970s and 80s saw a proliferation of increasingly elaborate events that centered around excessive and stylized beer drinking. These included pub crawls on foot, by bus, by bicycle, and in costume; speed drinking races; beer festivals which allowed ticket-holders all they could drink; and "grubby" events in which contestants drank beer and swallowed spaghetti, meat pies and the like as fast as they could. Deliberately induced and stylized displays of vomiting (known locally as "chundering") was a frequent part of these events.

Student criticism of these "boozy" and "grubby" events concentrated not only on their unaesthetic character, but also on their implicit gender basis. While capping controllers advertised these events as "fun for all," critics saw it differently:

I think it's fair to ask just who the "good time" advertised in the Capping Programme is for? Is it for everybody? Or is it for the 'boys' who so desperately try to prove their manhood by physical development, boorish behaviour, and drinking themselves insensible? I would suggest the latter....the emphasis of the Capping Programme as far as I can see is on just that: ritualised drinking. Lots of it. All the time. Pathetic. (Editorial, Salient, April 18, 1983:2).

New Zealanders had long been accustomed to associating beer drinking and masculinity (Phillips 1987). The increased emphasis on beer-centered events in capping programs accompanies the politically-conscious attacks on the traditional capping, as students became more polarized. The traditionalists among the students defiantly exaggerated their grubby and boozy excesses precisely as the other side criticized these activities. As the opposition insisted on making explicit the connection between these displays and the assertion of masculinity, the traditionalists paradoxically gave these activities an ever-higher profile while simultaneously insisting that there was no gendered or political content to what they were doing. They were just having fun.

The emphasis on drinking may also be interpreted as a defensive response to revelations and assertions about the class-based, nature and elitism embodied in the student role and in capping. Beer drinking (by men), long celebrated as the New Zealand national pastime, has served as a sign of the common, classless New Zealand culture (Phillips 1987).

The New Campus

Part of the reason for the transformation of capping from an extroverted to an introverted display, and also for the increased level of dissension within the student body, can be traced to measurable changes in the size and composition of the student population. Since the second world war the student population has increased rapidly, with the result that students today comprise a bigger portion of the New Zealand

population than formerly. University student numbers doubled in the 1960s (Dunstall 1981:416). The proportional increase can be seen in the numbers of secondary school leavers who indicated their intention to become full-time university students. Expressed as a percentage of the number of school-leavers each year, the university student population has increased significantly since 1951.

Table I Percentage of Secondary School Leavers Going on to Full-Time University Study, 1951-1982.

	1951	1961	1970	1982
Boys	5.3%	9.0%	15%	13%
Girls	2.1%	3.7%	7.79%	11%

As well as growing larger, the student population has become much more internally diverse in the post-war period, and especially since the 1970s. The most noticeable development in this area is that there are a lot more women on campus these days. The figures clearly show that women are attending university in much greater numbers today, with the result that they now comprise almost half of the student population. New Zealand university campuses were once male-dominated, but since the 1970s this is no longer the case.

These and other changes in the composition of the student body have had an important effect on student culture, including capping. Professor Tim Beaglehole

Table II Internal Students at New Zealand Universities, 1958-1988.

	1958	1978	1988
Males	9,105	24,982	29,188
Females	2,900	16,853	27,742
Females as % of total	24%	40%	49%

echoed the views of several Victoria University faculty who had witnessed this change and noted its effect on the celebration of capping.

The university was much more homogeneous then [in the 1950s], in age range and social spread. Any older students were part-time, and were not the ones primarily involved....[today] the place is much bigger, more older students, more married women, growing numbers of Maoris and minority groups; there are many students in the university now who would find this sort of thing [capping] very difficult to understand (W-5-4-88:144).

I do not have figures on the relative numbers of Maori students and older students, but the remarkable jump in the proportion of women students alone would account for a lot of the changes in capping. Much of the humor of the old-style capping was from a decidedly male point of view, but with the composition of the student population today it is no longer possible to maintain that this point of view represents all or even the majority of students.

New Zealand students today are more likely to share the youth culture of their peers in terms of dress, leisure, and other interests. Stuart Johnston, a graduate of

Victoria and a long-time faculty member, remarked on this difference between student culture in his day and in the present:

There used to be a distinctive student culture which was different from that of the peer groups of young people in the rest of the community....Now their lives as students totally merges with the other facets of their life. It's something I've noticed quite a lot; they don't think of themselves as being apart from their contemporaries, as students once did (W-5-13-88-1:80).

The growth of a common youth culture that transcends socioeconomic and even national boundaries has been noted as an international development since the 1960s. Michael Moffatt found a similar development in college student culture in New Jersey. "Most Rutgers students," he reported, "guessed that no-one in a crowd of strangers their own age would be able to guess that they were college students simply by looking at them" (Moffatt 1989:51).

Although student culture has not vanished completely, it does have a lower profile today than it did in the past. This change at Victoria is marked by the abandonment of the informal student costume of scarves and blazers in the university colors of green and gold. The transformation of capping covers the same ground; from an extroverted display located in the public spaces of the city, it became introverted, located mostly on campus and dealing with topics and personalities of interest only to the students themselves. The central signs of capping similarly changed. Once, capping events had enacted a vision of an antagonistic relationship between town and gown, and the central signs in this enactment were the figures of the student and the townie. Today, the townie hardly appears at all in capping events.

Instead, capping focuses on different groups within the student population, satirizing the student Executive, the arty avant-garde student, and so forth.

The New New Zealand

What happened to the Victoria University student society is a microcosm for and part of similar changes that have taken place in New Zealand society generally since the Second World War and especially since 1970. Economic and demographic changes that began in the post-war period have culminated in a major cultural and ideological shift that began in the 1970s and is still going on today. On the surface, this shift appears as a change from a contented and homogenous society to a diverse and divided one. This appearance is attributable to a change in the climate of opinion whereby divisions in society that were once glossed over are now being reckoned with, and groups that previously gave the appearance of acquiescing to the dominance of a monolithic pakeha male culture are now insisting on their difference.

To many New Zealanders, these changes in consciousness are threatening. They mourn the loss of the consensus and harmony that seemed to characterize New Zealand in the past. An eloquent expression of this point of view may be found in an essay published in a Sunday newspaper supplement in 1988. In it, former Prime Minister Sir John Marshall laments the loss of the old harmonious New Zealand that he knew:

In the 1950s and 60s, New Zealand was a happy country. We had our arguments and differences, but without rancour or acrimony. There was an underlying harmony. In politics we worked for consensus and generally achieved it....Economically we enjoyed stable conditions with

inflation averaging 3 per cent a year. We had an expanding economy, full employment and a rising standard of living. We were not beset with social disruption. We had minority groups and protest groups, but they were small and seldom resorted to violence....

The country had a shared purpose and agreed objectives....Looking back now, those years of the 50s and 60s appear as a golden age.... From being a united and homogenous nation, we have become a divided people. Dissension and antagonism have become the prevailing mood in politics, industrial relations, race relations. Class distinctions have become more obvious. Marriage and family relationships are less secure. Feminists have become more aggressive. ("A Nation Divided Against Itself," Challenge Weekly, n.d.).

I have quoted Marshall's words at some length because I could not write a more eloquent description of the changes between the old New Zealand and the new, changes that boil down to the transition from a homogenous and contented society to a diverse and divided one. During the years since 1940 there was a rapid acceleration in population growth, and New Zealanders changed from a predominantly rural people to an urbanized, better-educated, white-collar society (Dunstall 1981). In the years after the second world war New Zealand shared in the economic boom of the western world, enjoying prosperity and full employment. The entry of Britain into the Common Market in 1972 deprived New Zealand of her principal export market; then the 1973 oil crisis and international recession, was a further blow to the New Zealand economy, which has not fully recovered since. The 1970s and 80s saw the end of full employment, rising inflation, and a substantial drop in average per capita income (Freeman-Moir 1984:239-242; Sinclair 1986:260). Prime Minister David Lange sums up the change in the nation's economic fortunes in pessimistic terms:

"Just three decades ago New Zealand was in the top five of the world's wealthiest nations," he said in 1987. "Today we rank twenty-fifth" (in Boston and Holland 1987:ix).

These demographic and economic factors have led to increased divisiveness in New Zealand society since the 1970s, as well as helping to create a fundamental change in the national cultural and ideological scene. Commentators on this change agree in describing it as the demolition of the formerly dominant national self-image, a process that has been described as the Kiwi bloke under siege. Jock Phillips (1987) has produced a detailed study of the New Zealand male stereotype and the challenges that it currently faces. Previously, the dominant image that New Zealanders held of their culture and national character was the image of a Pakeha male, whose icons were rugby and beer. The heyday of this stereotype was in the 1950s and 60s, when, Phillips argues, "the sheer ideological hegemony of the male mythology served to disguise conflicts and obscure diversity within society itself" (1987:284). This mythology, with its emphasis on leisure pursuits (summed up in the proverbial phrase "rugby, racing, and beer," used to describe New Zealand culture), assumed that New Zealand was culturally uniform, and masked the presence of real socioeconomic differences between social classes and between Maori and Pakeha. Furthermore this "Kiwi bloke" ideology ignored the presence of women entirely (Dunstall 1981:423-424; Phillips 1987:261-289).

The 1970s and 80s have seen this stereotype seriously challenged if not entirely replaced. The feminist movement and the increasing assertion of Maori

cultural identity have attacked the comfortable homogenous assumptions of the past. New Zealand, like other industrialized nations, has become much more diverse in the sense that diversity and inequality is now widely acknowledged.

The Politicization of Capping

The critiques of and the reforms introduced into capping during the 1970s amounted to a politicization of the festival, in two ways. On one hand the politically conscious critique of capping was based on recognizing the social and political significance of activities that had previously been widely accepted as having no serious consequences or implications. Secondly, the student body became split over this event, and an individual's advanced or reactionary stance was indicated by whether or not they supported the old style capping.

The radical and feminist critique subverted, not to say demolished, the traditional framing of capping as "just fun." They pointed out the connections between the humor of capping and the realities of the situation of students in society. They also pointed out the incongruities between the messages of capping and the liberal and classless ideologies of most students and in New Zealand generally. As part of the remedy for what they perceived as an iniquitous situation, they attempted to modify or abolish the most offensive events, while also introducing serious, overtly political events into the capping program. Thus the capping entertainments included debates on current issues, such as the legal status of marijuana, apartheid in South Africa, racism, and the like. This mixture of events framed as entertainment, with

overtly political and serious issues--including Executive by-elections--continued to be the norm in capping programs throughout the 1980s.

Students who disagreed with or felt threatened by the politics of the leadership, were unhappy at the mixture of the serious and the ludic in capping. The May Day celebrations held in place of capping in 1973 elicited a letter to Salient in which the writer asked rhetorically, "Does everything have to be politically motivated?" "Now we can't even enjoy ourselves on capping day," the letter said:

surely the past capping activities brought students together for about the only time in the year and usually most people thoroughly enjoyed themselves....the amount of participation showed how much this activity is enjoyed as a break away from this fuckwit place. So how about giving the fucking politics a bloody great boot in the arse and get some fun back into this machinery with a few good stunts etc. (Salient, May 1, 1973:19).

The student body became polarized in this period, and the traditional capping became an issue around which the political differences crystallized. Briefly, the supporters of capping--who continued to organize some of the traditional events, were at odds with the more political and radical segment of the student body. Thus capping became the index of a particular lifestyle and political orientation, defended by some and attacked by others.

The extent of these divisions and the powerful reactions they provoked may be seen in a 1981 incident, in which the capping controllers literally demolished an anti-apartheid booth set up in the Union, under the impression that the space it occupied had been reserved for capping events. However, as one observer noted, their violent

actions were also prompted by the belief that the booth's presence "contravened the whole idea of Capping Week; namely, to have a good time, and fuck anyone else" (letter to Salient, May 4, 1981:2).

Another incident involving the same individuals illustrates the issue underlying the division over capping. During a forum on rape held in the Union prior to capping, the capping organizers interrupted a speaker by calling out, "Rape is legal during Capping Week." When they were called upon to apologize, one controller replied that they were not prepared to withdraw the statement because it was "just a joke" (Salient, May 4, 1981:3). The pertinent issue revolves around this last statement. Capping had usually been framed as "just a joke"--that is, that the messages conveyed by it were not to be taken seriously, and they either did not accurately reflect the students' attitudes or else did not accurately represent reality. This frame denied any connection between the festive message and the lived-in world. The critique of capping, represented in this case by the Executive members who demanded an apology for the rape is legal joke, were insisting on the real repercussions of the framed statement, regardless of how it was meant by the speakers. Either it was indicative of attitudes towards rape and hence towards women that were unacceptable, or else it could send the wrong message about the Association's attitudes to this subject.

The argument over this incident illustrates the basis for the denunciation of capping. What the critics were doing was equivalent to what Joan Emerson (1969) called the transposition of the topic of communication from a humorous framework to

a serious one. In the past, students had framed capping in various ways that suggested that it should not be taken seriously. Among the various frame styles available to achieve this aim are those that present activities as "just fun," trivial, childish, spontaneous, and within the realm of humor and play. Although it focusses on the humorous framing of verbal communication, Emerson's account of the negotiation of these frames is apposite for the study of capping as well. Whether the frame is described as humor, as Emerson does, or play, as Gregory Bateson does (1972); its operation is the same:

Normally a person is not held responsible for what he does in jest to the same degree that he would be for a serious gesture. Humor, as an aside from the main discourse, need not be taken into account in subsequent interaction. It need not become part of the history of the encounter, or be used for the continuous reassessment of the nature and worth of each participant, or built into the meaning of subsequent acts....humor officially does not 'count' (Emerson 1969:169).

Up until the 1970s, students framed capping as something that did not count, meaning that it did not have any serious or long-lasting consequences on, or implications about the nature of the real world outside of capping. By and large they succeeded in winning the agreement of the public to this interpretation. Consequently, students did not hold themselves and were not held by others to be fully responsible for what they did and said during capping. This agreement not to hold actors accountable amounted to license, although, as in any framing of behavior, the exact limits of this license had to be negotiated on each occasion and students were sometimes found guilty of "going over the top."

A significant illustration of Emerson's words about the content of the humor/play frame not being "used for the continuous reassessment of the nature and worth of each participant" may be seen in the common treatment of those students who were arrested for capping misdemeanors. New Zealand law provides that when someone is convicted of a first offense, if it is a relatively minor one, their lawyer may ask for them to be "convicted and discharged," meaning that although they have been convicted, the conviction will not appear on their permanent record. The lawyer can argue that the offense is atypical of the accused and that a conviction would have an unduly damaging effect on their career and reputation. Since students could be viewed as professionals in training, this argument was frequently used in respect of them.

The humor/play frame is an ambiguous one, however. Emerson's study of joking communication in a hospital setting illustrates the way that this frame can be used to introduce serious but difficult topics into conversation, and the negotiations between jokers and listeners to transpose a humorous comment into the serious realm and back again. In joking speech and in festival behavior, audiences may refuse to agree to the humorous framing of a topic if the content is too serious or too unacceptable. This is what happened when process floats were attacked for "going too far."

The 1970s and 80s assault on capping amounts to an effort to transpose all of capping into the serious realm, or in other words to insist upon its serious import. This move is of a different type from the earlier sporadic criticisms of things that

went too far. It stems from an attitude that refuses to excuse virtually anything from the serious realm, in which almost everything always counts. This attitude is not confined to students, nor to people of a particular political persuasion, but is widespread in the contemporary world.

The Death of Humor

"In some ways humor's got more difficult."

-- Tim Beaglehole

Some professors who had seen capping in its former days and as it exists today were of the opinion that the change had come about because of a change in student attitudes. One professor felt that students had lost their sense of humor and fun:

Some of the students in lectures complain about the capping band interrupting lectures. I wish they would come into my lectures; it would brighten up some of them. With internal assessment students have become more conservative, more concerned about passing, less free and easy, or wanting to live it up and be nice and jolly throughout the year.

And that comes through in their lack of humor. If they think it's not on the syllabus, they don't want to know about it. They're very exam-oriented. They're not so tolerant of distractions in lectures any more. They queue up at half past eight now to get into the library; lack of space and competition demands it. The whole student attitude has become less light-hearted, and far, far more serious (Gordon Stewart W-2-25-88:333).

Professor Beaglehole also agreed that student attitudes had changed, had become more serious, and more sensitive about humor:

I think [Procesh] came to an end because somehow the university had changed, Wellington had changed, students became more politically

serious. They saw the procession I think probably as a frivolous thing, and not really as a vehicle for the sort of message that they were wanting to convey in the seventies.

I think the other thing that one would have to say now looking back at it is that I would have thought ninety percent of the humor now would be totally unacceptable. It was sexist, it was racist, and it was at the time in doubtful taste, but at the time people found it humorous. I think now people would find it offensive, not because people are puritanical, but because they are more sensitive to some of the butts of undergraduate humor. So it would be difficult to think of reviving it. It was very much a thing of its time (Tim Beaglehole W-5-4-88:70).

Professor Beaglehole's comments go beyond the common observation that politically conscious students are more serious than their predecessors, and suggests a direction in which the cause of that apparent humorlessness may be sought. The connection is in the suggestion that people today are "more sensitive to the butts of undergraduate humor." I would extend that statement, and say that in contemporary western society generally today, people are more sensitive to the butts of all humor. This has created a situation in which, as Beaglehole said, "humor's got more difficult," if not impossible, to achieve.

There seems to be plenty of evidence that suggests that humor should be put on an endangered species list, at least as far as humorous expressions in public are concerned. Stand up comedians are picketed because their material is considered sexist. In the United States, more than one politician has been censured or has lost their chance for an election victory because they happened to make a joke that was deemed to be racist or in bad taste. In New Zealand, the Race Relations Act was amended in 1977 to make it unlawful for anyone publish or use in a public place any

words "which are threatening, abusive, or insulting, --being matter or words likely to excite hostility or ill-will against, or bring into contempt or ridicule, any group of persons in New Zealand on the ground of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins" (Section 9 of the Race Relations Act 1971). In 1988 this law was invoked to fine the Lincoln College Students' Association for their capping magazine, which contained a large number of ethnic jokes¹.

My feeling is that there is a connection between the difficulties faced by humor (and capping), and the diversity and dissension that mark contemporary society. Humor has become more difficult because of the lack of cultural consensus, and because of the contemporary attitude in which virtually everything has become politicized. The loss of consensus is what John Marshall lamented in describing contemporary New Zealand as a nation divided against itself. Where once there was a single ideological and cultural voice--that of the pakeha male--that dominated the political, cultural scene, now there are multiple voices and alternative points of view presented by women, Maoris, and other ethnic groups (Dunstall 1981:423-424).

Part of this change is that previously unchallenged verities, associations, and meanings are now being questioned at every turn. "Everything that was once thought to be a 'fact' or a 'self-evident truth' or a belief that could exist beyond question is now seen as a social expression or a sign" (MacCannell and MacCannell 1982:xii; emphasis original). In other words, these truths and facts are now recognized as

¹ The period that I describe as endangering public humor has also seen an explosion in the popularity of stand-up comedy, which is a phenomenon worthy of a separate investigation.

arbitrary cultural products, and therefore as being both subject to change and inevitably part of the political realm. The MacCannells have dubbed this period "the time of the sign," meaning that this attitude towards culture as arbitrary social construct is a semiotic attitude. "There is a concrete and living link between the semiotic revolution and the current rapid pace of change of values and behavior in modern social life," they say. "Semiotics is the study of the means of production of meaning" (1982:9; emphasis original). "In addressing the problem of how we know and how things mean from a non-abstract standpoint, semiotics transforms all science into political action" (8; emphasis original). In other words, the current trend is to treat all of culture as an arbitrary socially-produced construct, which is tantamount to treating all cultural expressions as political.

While talking about the form that capping humor had taken in the past, many people expressed the feeling that those jokes were not be considered funny or acceptable today. A number of people seemed to feel the need to defend those old jokes by saying, in effect, that "we were all innocent back then." In other words, they were innocent of the implications of their acts. Transvestism is one example of an old form of capping humor that is no longer practiced much, if at all. Ron Hill described the common practice of playful transvestism at social events as well as during capping in the 1950s:

That kind of thing was by no means uncommon. Sometimes at the university there were vice-versa dances, where the men went dressed as women and the women went dressed as men. That seems to have disappeared entirely. I suppose the sexual overtones have become much greater. People didn't think very much of that kind of thing (W-2-29-88:485).

When sexuality was commonly considered to be fixed, a biological given, then it was possible for young men to dress as outrageously exaggerated women and not risk any doubt being thrown on their sexual identity. The play frame would remain intact, and no-one would be likely to try to transpose their act into the serious realm because that was almost inconceivable. Today, however, masculinity is widely if not universally considered to be a much more fragile construct; therefore the play frame is harder to maintain around transvestism. There is now more risk that men playing at being transvestites will be labelled as actual transvestites or bisexuals.

With the recognition that matters such as gender and ethnicity are social constructs comes the realization that these things are also inevitably political; that is, they arise from, reflect, and help perpetuate certain sociopolitical conditions. This realization is accompanied by a disinclination to allow anything to hide behind the humor/play frame; every expressive act is seen as constituted in and contributing to the real world all the time, even when it is presented as being insignificant and apolitical. Just as the feminist movement has maintained that "the personal is political," so too the trivial is now also widely recognized as political. In New Zealand the argument over whether the national rugby side should play South Africa illustrates this process: anti-tour arguments insist on the ramifications that continued sporting contacts have on granting implicit support to the South African regime; while tour supporters insist that rugby is just a game, that politics should not be mixed with sport, and that the two realms--rugby and a country's political situation--do not affect one another and can be kept separate. Significantly, the division among students over

capping was sometimes linked to the nationwide division over the rugby tour, as when one capping program announced a pub crawl and suggested that anti-apartheid supporters would not enjoy it (cf Phillips 1987).

In face to face settings negotiations over whether play frames may apply can be carried out (although they are tricky, as Emerson's (1969) study shows), in public contexts such as capping such negotiations are even more difficult because it is harder to be sure that there is any consensus over what topics may be joked about. Since the 1970s there is even less of this consensus than before. Once the figure of the student in capping was understood by students as representing witty, creative, iconoclastic clown and a social critic. The race, gender and class of this figure remained implicit, silently supporting the unstated assumption that it was normal to be middle-class, Pakeha and male in New Zealand. Today, those implicit assumptions are made explicit, and the student figure enacted in capping is interpreted by many as sexist, racist at worst, and vulgar, immature, irresponsible at best. While it is valuable to remember that capping is inevitably gendered, and class- and ethnically-based, these facts need not spell the death of that old figure of the witty iconoclastic student.

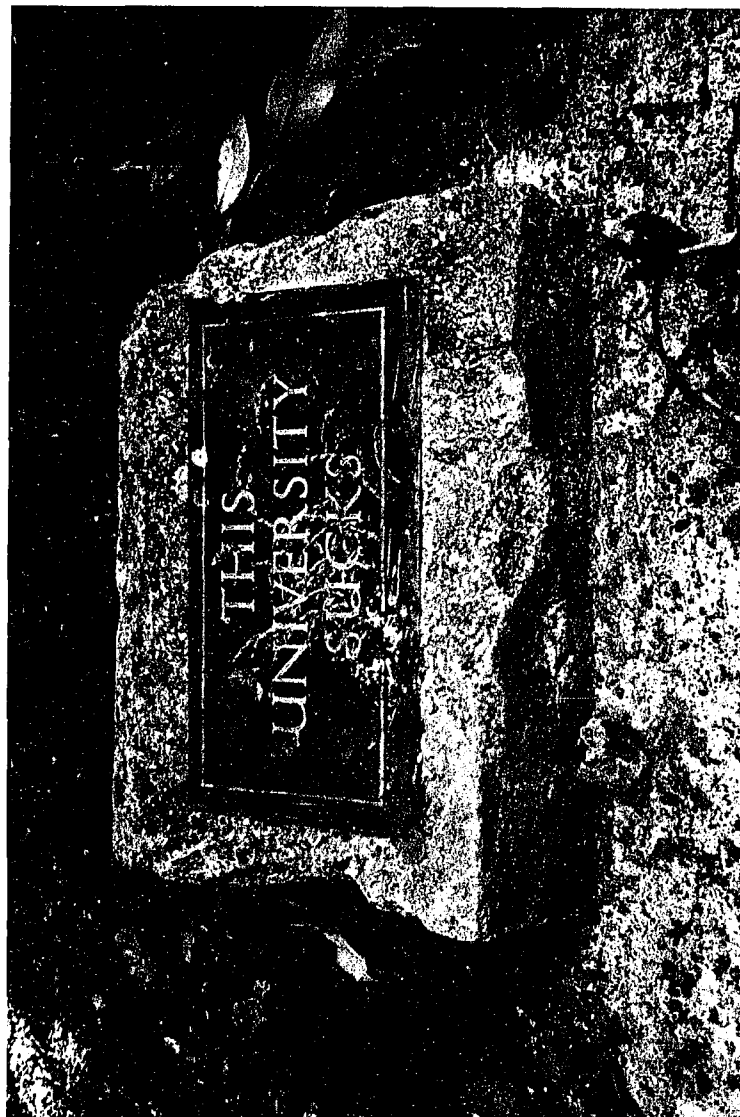


Figure 1 An innocent-looking plaque in the university gardens.

APPENDIX
LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Anastasiou, Spiro; 28; journalist.

Kelburn, February 29 1988.

B., Grant; 19; student.

Kelburn, April 10 1988.

Beaglehole, T. H.; 55; professor.

Victoria University, May 4 1988.

Beckford, Gyles; 36; journalist.

Kelburn, May 2 1988.

Brooker, Kathleen; 85; retired teacher.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Brough, Alan; 20; actor.

Victoria University, May 12 1988.

C., Colin; 19; student.

Kelburn, April 10 1988.

Datson, Geoffrey; 63; company president.

Oriental Bay, April 1 1988.

Doogue, Doreen M.; 80; retired secondary teacher.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Dreadon, Brian; 41; scientific fisheries observer.

Victoria University, March 1 1988.

E., Kim; 19; student.

Kelburn, April 10 1988.

Edwards, Doug; 80; retired.

Lower Hutt, March 15 1988; Kelburn, March 22 1988.

Fleming, Margaret A.; 70; housewife.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Galloway, John.

Newtown, April 1988.

Geary, David; 24; actor.

Wellington, May 9 1988.

Goble, Eviee; 73; retired teacher.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Harding, Olga; 76; retired schoolteacher.

Northland, March 3 1988.

Harvey, W. E.; 62; Victoria University Registrar.

Victoria University, March 31 1988.

Hayward, Bronwyn; 19; student.

Weir House, May 3 1988.

Head, Marie; 67; retired schoolteacher.

Wellington, March 30 1988.

Hill, Ron; 52; university teacher.

Victoria University, February 2 1988.

Hogg, Ralph; 80; retired schoolteacher.

Lower Hutt, March 15 1988.

Hogg, Vivienne; 75; housewife.

Lower Hutt, March 15 1988.

Horan, Paul; 21; student.

Kelburn, April 19 1988.

Huntington, Frances Mary; 79; retired.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Ilalio, Elena; advisor to the Race Relations Office.

Wellington, March 29 1988.

J. W.; 26; student.

Victoria University, May 6 1988.

Johnston, Stuart; 56; professor; assistant Vice-Chancellor.

Victoria University, May 13 1988.

M, Sean; 21; student.

Victoria University, May 4 1988.

MacKenzie, Craig; 84; retired teacher.

Lower Hutt, March 15 1988.

MacKenzie, Mary; 82; housewife.

Lower Hutt, March 15 1988.

Major, Kathleen; 52; housewife.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Mander, Nigel; 21; student; president of the Victoria University Students' Association.

Victoria University, February 2 1988.

Mann, Michael; 30; police officer, part time law student.

Victoria University, March 17 1988.

McCarthy, Margaret; University Marshall.

Victoria University, March 31 1988.

McCreary, John R.; 68; retired professor.

Ngaio, April 12 1988.

McHalick, Emily; 21; student.

Victoria University, May 12 1988.

McMaster, Nita; 66; retired teacher.

Northland, March 3 1988.

Naumann, Audrey; 77; secondary school teacher.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

O'Neil, Gerard; Social Activities Manager, Victoria University Students' Association.

Victoria University, May 3 1988.

Pomeroy, Arthur; 35; university lecturer.

Victoria University, March 1 1988.

Price, Hugh; 59; retired publisher.

Kelburn, March 4 1988.

Radford, Nancy; 72; retired teacher.

Wellington, March 30 1988.

Rattray, Craig; 19; law student, president of the Weir House Residents' Association.

Weir House, May 3 1988.

Rennie, Hugh; 43; lawyer.

Wellington, April 14, 1988.

Riley, Miriam; 74; retired school principal.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Rimmer, Tony; 44; professor.

Bloomington, July 18 1987.

Robb, Jim; 68; retired university teacher.

Kelburn, March 11 1988.

Rush, Sean; 19; student.

Kelburn, April 10 1988.

Sheat, Bill; 57; solicitor.

Lower Hutt, March 5, March 19, April 23 1988

Smith, Dave; 42; solicitor.

Wellington, March 16 1988.

Stewart, Enid; 77.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Stewart, Gordon; 31; lawyer, lecturer.

Victoria University, February 25 1988.

Stewart, Margaret; 40; Investigating Officer, Ombudsman's Office.

Kelburn, April 12 1988.

Stuart, Julia; 47; journalist.

Trentham, March 22 1988.

Tait, Gordon; 36; training consultant.

Wellington, March 16 1988.

Tarrant, Deidre; 42; dance teacher.

Kelburn, May 13 1988.

Tarrant, Victoria; 34; housewife.

Kelburn, May 13 1988.

Thomson, Iris Pearl; 80; retired school teacher.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

Wallace, Ellen; 76; housewife.

Wadestown, March 30 1988.

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DEGREES

- 1992 PhD (Folklore), Indiana University. Dissertation: *The Ritual Humor of Students: Capping at Victoria University 1902-1988*.
Qualifying exams in British folklore and folk narrative. Minors: Classical Studies; Semiotics.
- 1983 MA (Folklore), Indiana University.
- 1981 MA Hons (Latin and German), Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.
- 1980 BA (Latin and German), Victoria University.

HONORS

- 1988-90 Indiana University Research and Graduate Development Fellowship
- 1987 Richard M. Dorson Award for Dissertation Fieldwork
- 1985 Distinction, Ph.D. Folk Narrative exam
- 1981 Indiana University Graduate School Fellowship
- 1981 Fulbright Travel Grant
- 1981 New Zealand University Grants Committee Postgraduate Scholarship in Latin
- 1980 New Zealand University Grants Committee Senior Scholarship
- 1979 H.A. Murray Prize; 1977 Rankin Brown Prize (both for the top student in Classics at Victoria University)
- 1977 Erasmus Scholarship (for the top ranking candidate in Latin in the New Zealand Scholarships Examination)

MOIRA L. SMITH

EXPERIENCE

- 1989-92 Coordinator, IU-MLA Bibliography project. (Developed and implemented project to recruit and oversee volunteer indexers for the Folklore section of the MLA BIBLIOGRAPHY; edited grant proposals.)
- 1990, 1988 Student Advisory Committee to the Dean of the Libraries
- 1988 Folklore PhD examinations committee
- 1988 Special Projects Coordinator, I.U. Folklore Institute. (Development officer, alumni relations, grant writing and conference organization.)
- 1987 Instructor, "Introduction to Folklore," Indiana University. Sole charge of course.
- 1986 Instructor, "American Folklore," Indiana University at Purdue. Sole charge of course.
- 1985-87 Research Assistant in Folklore and Classical Studies.
- 1984-91 Library Assistant, Folklore Collection, Indiana University Libraries
- 1982-84 Associate Instructor, "Introduction to Folklore," Indiana University.

PUBLICATIONS

In preparation:

All Souls and All Fools: Esoteric and Exoteric Fabrications for April First and Halloween.

Town and Gown Down Under: Processions and Conflict in the Construction of Student Identity.

A Graffiti Collection Project for Beginning Folklore Classes.

Fooling All of the People Some of the Time: Practical Jokes in Social Context.

- 1990 "Jokes and Practical Jokes." In *The Emergence of Folklore in Everyday Life: A Fieldguide for Beginning Students*, ed. George F. Shoemaker, pp.73-82. Bloomington: Folklore Publications Group.
- 1986 "Walls Have Ears: A Contextual Approach to Graffiti." *International Folklore Review*, 4: 100-105.
- 1984 "The Kernel Story: A New Conversational Genre?" *Folklore Forum*, 17: 199-207.
- 1984 *Conversational Folklore* (editor, with Regina Bendix). Special issue of *Folklore Forum*, 17.

MOIRA L. SMITH

(Publications, Continued)

- 1981 *Realistic Fantasy and Fantastic Reality: Aspects of the Witch Figure in the Märchen and Sagen of Grimm and the Malleus Maleficarum.* M.A. thesis, Victoria University.

In addition, several book reviews in *Folklore Forum* and *Southern Folklore* 1986-present.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- 1990 "Graduation, Practical Jokes, and Swine Flu." American Folklore Society Meeting, Oakland.
- 1989 "Town and Gown Down Under: On the Necessity of Opposition to Festival Inversion." American Folklore Society meeting, Philadelphia.
- 1987 "Fooling All of the People Some of the Time: Techniques of Practical Jokers." American Folklore Society meeting, Albuquerque.
- 1986 "Prankster or Sadist: Audience Reactions to Pranks." American Folklore Society meeting, Baltimore.
- 1984 "Walls Have Ears: Co-Performance and Humor in Graffiti." American Folklore Society meeting, San Diego.
- 1983 "The Overturned Outhouse and the Car on the Roof: Halloween Pranks in Reality and Legend." American Folklore Society meeting, Nashville.
- 1983 "Research Report on Conversational Genres of Folklore." American Folklore Society meeting, Nashville.

MEMBERSHIPS

American Folklore Society
American Anthropological Association
International Society for Contemporary Legend Research

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Born December 10, 1958, New Zealand; married James Hurd 1989.
Visa Status: permanent resident.